

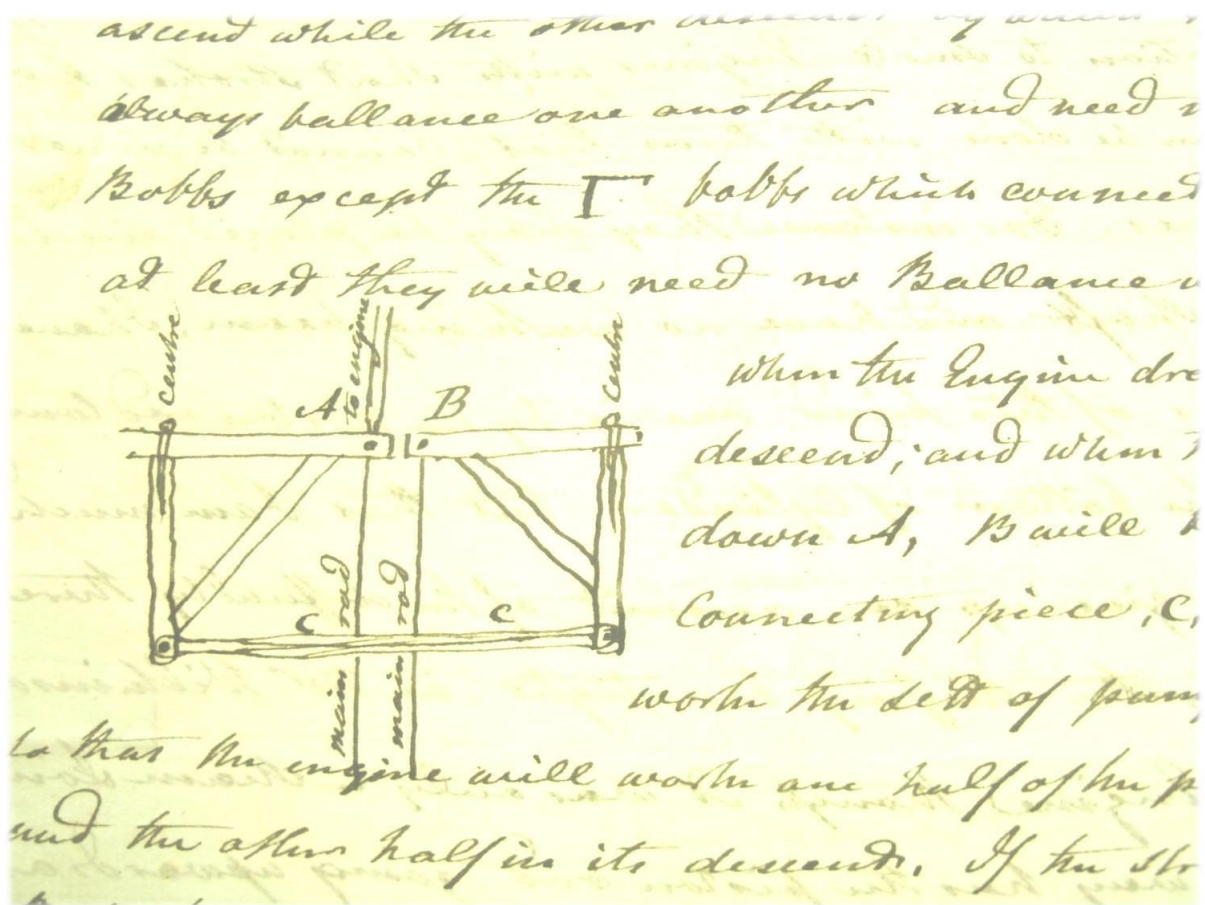
Title	Poetry and the Archive
Type	Thesis
URL	<a href="https://ualresearchonline.arts.ac.uk/id/eprint/13328/">https://ualresearchonline.arts.ac.uk/id/eprint/13328/</a>
Date	2016
Citation	Banks, Annabel (2016) Poetry and the Archive. PhD thesis, University of the Arts London and Falmouth University.
Creators	Banks, Annabel

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## Poetry and the Archive

Annabel Banks

## Acknowledgements

Over the last four years my self-identification and confidence as an artist has blossomed. This is a direct result of my work on 'Poetry and the Archive', a project supported by the European Social Fund, King Edward Mine, Cornwall Record Office and Falmouth University, and only made possible by the contributions of all involved. I would like to take this opportunity to give my thanks and to dedicate this work to them.

First, to all in Cornwall who gave me their words with which write poetry. I cannot provide a list of names, nor would they want me to, but I hope that they feel I have done some justice to their stories.

To Doctor Kym Martindale, my primary supervisor and guiding star, who always brought the work back to the poetry and its affect, however tangled I became in deconstruction, landscape analysis, or panic. Her kindness, capability, and poetic sensitivity made this journey for me. I am proud to call her my friend. To Dr Mark Leahy, whose unfaltering interest, vast knowledge and gentle encouragement were a joy, and whose concentrated questions helped me find new ways in which to write. To Dr Tim Cooper, whose insightful queries kept me honest, and who stepped in at times of greatest worry to help make a plan that kept me moving in the right direction. My thanks will be with all three forever.

I also dedicate this work to Dr Niamh Downing: unceasing in her perspicacity, generous with her precious time, and unfailing in her encouragement of me as an artist, academic and teacher. I hope I've proved worthy of her faith in me. To Jemma Julian, fierce facilitator and gentle friend, whose interventions, both professional and personal, kept this work from failing more than once. To my fellow poets, for the discussions, the disagreements, and for teaching me their words for 'can': Rupert M Loydell, Camilla Nelson and Marianne Morris. Your kindnesses are innumerable.

To all those who have helped, encouraged, fed and watered me, and made my time in Cornwall brighter for their friendship. There are many of you, but particular thanks goes to Daniel Metcalfe, Cassie McEwan, and CM Carter. There was rain, yes, and there was sun. To the non-Cornwall friends with whom I travelled this path, Dr Anna Bull and Dr Eley Williams, and especially Laura Cowan, whose keen eye and sharp mind are only two of the reasons I love her. This is the work we do.

To all at King Edward Mine, particularly Tony Brooks and Kingsley Rickard. Thank you for sharing your time, fascinations, and biscuits. To Nigel MacDonald, my co-presenter for Stamps and Stories, who provided such a strong headframe for my poetry. To Carolyn Arnold, whose marvellous pictures captured some of the excitement of that day, and who permitted me include her work here. My gratitude to you all.

To the staff at the Cornwall Record Office. Thank you for the (g)love, and for inviting me into your world. Boulton and Watt sleep happily with you. Special thanks to Deborah Tritton, who trusted me, and Chloe Phillips, who made my workshops possible. I asked and you always said yes. And to Sophie Hartfield at Regpower, who introduced me to Huer and Wartha. I miss waving back.

Finally, I dedicate this work to my father, David Banks, whose love, and love of Cornwall, made me who I am today. And to the rest of my family: Mama, Tink, Natalie, Digger, Dunc, Caroline, Sam, Joe, Kizzy, and Sarah. You have supported me emotionally and financially, with the warmth and laughter I couldn't live without.

I never really explained what I was up to in Cornwall.

Here it is.

Annabel Banks  
October 2011- March 2016.

## ABSTRACT

In 2006 selected Cornish mining areas were validated as UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Here are found numerous remnants of the mining industry that justified Cornwall's prominence from the Industrial Revolution up to the close of the last major mine in the 1990s. An essential part of that history is the trade of The Boulton and Watt Mining Company, formed when Midlands businessman Matthew Boulton (1728-1809) joined forces with Scotsman James Watt (1736-1819). This partnership influenced the history of Cornish mining and the whole Industrial Revolution. Traces of their endeavours remain on the Cornish landscape and in Cornish identity. Correspondence between the two men and Cornish mine manager Thomas Wilson (1748-1820) is held at the Cornish Records Office and is available online.

Creative work began with these letters, seeking moments, words and gestures to resonate with narratives of the Cornish post-industrial landscape. These narratives were gathered through interviews with locals, tourists, students, mining enthusiasts and those who knew nothing of the Cornish industrial past, and were supported by experience and observation of the Cornish landscape. Poetry written from these sources strives to reflect upon contemporary landscape use and promote cultural ownership and understanding. To this aim, readings of the two collections were given in 2013 and the collections subsequently self-published.

Responses to the work show that this project not only promoted Cornish industrial heritage but also prompted recognition of how stories of the contemporary Cornish landscape are intertwined with its history.

This project's partner was the King Edward Mine Museum, Troon, near Camborne, and its aims were supported by the Cornwall Record Office, Truro.

## ORIGINAL CONTRIBUTION

Besides the original poetry that forms part of this thesis, I offer two contributions to knowledge. The first is to be found in my methodology, with my creation of the research subset The Body over the Tamar. An article on this approach, with three poems, was published in *Creative Approaches to Research* (Banks, 2016). The second contribution is the culmination of my creative practice, where I created a new way of writing between historical and contemporary narratives. I call this narrative resonance.

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## THE LETTERS OF BOULTON AND WATT

We begin in the archive, with the Cornish correspondence of the Boulton and Watt Mining Company, established when James Watt demonstrated his improved steam technology to Matthew Boulton, a well-established and successful Birmingham businessman. The partnership lasted from 1775 to 1800, but the company they established went on for over a hundred years.

Some 1100 letters pertaining to Cornwall were bought at auction in 2003 after a successful funding bid made by Cornwall Heritage Trust with support from the National Lottery. These are now cared for by the Cornwall Record Office in Truro. Known as the Wilson Papers, the letters are the Cornwall-bound correspondence to the company's business manager, Thomas Wilson, who lived in Chasewater, and are dated from 1780–1803.

It should be noted that Wilson's replies do not make up part of the archive. These letters are incomers, sent over the Tamar to effect change upon the Cornish landscape and the progression of the lives of the people who lived there. The subjects of the letters are business dealings, including the ramifications of the Cornish mine adventurer's disputes over the protection of patents and the way the technology had been licensed, for the machinery was not sold but leased in exchange for a proportion of the cost of coal saved. Resistance, and resentment, over these dealings comprise much of the archive, which records hopes and frustrations on both sides of the argument. But there are also human stories recorded in the letters: births and deaths, accidents and illness, and good wishes for life in Cornwall.

M<sup>r</sup>. Wilson, Sirs. —

Sho 14 June 1794

Dear Sir

M<sup>r</sup>. Boulton having strained one of the Tendons of his right hand which will prevent his using it for a few days, I am requested by him to answer your favour of the 9<sup>th</sup> Inst.

Your fears respecting poor Jesse's illness are but too well founded, she expired on Friday Morning the 6<sup>th</sup> Inst. in the arms of her father & mother, of the rupture of a blood vessel in the Lungs. The state of extenuation to which she was reduced had before left us but very little hopes, and without this accident, she could only have lingered a few days longer, until a gradual extinction of life had taken place. It is a consolation to us, that she was insensible of her situation to the last and experienced but little pain and no violent efforts in her last end. My father & M<sup>rs</sup>. Watt are very much depressed and afflicted by this accident, which I fear they will long feel severely; though change of place will take off the edge of their grief, the cure must be left to time the only assuager of our bitterest misfortunes. I hope my father & M<sup>rs</sup>. Watt will be prevailed upon to leave home for some time and take a turn to London & the Bathing places upon the East & South Coasts. —

Although M<sup>r</sup>. Boulton attended in town constantly

AD1583/7/52

and

Figure 1: AD1583/7/52. James Watt Junior to Thomas Wilson, 1794.

## CONTEXTUAL REVIEW

This project is a work of poetry, and yet it should be understood that the poetry has taken inspiration from different disciplines. 'Archive' and 'landscape' are not simply nouns found scattered throughout my poems, but deeply troubled concepts that hold their own systems of problems and permissions. To make these clear to the reader, this contextual review is offered as a map, helping to site the work at its juncture of archival theory (practical and philosophical), academic investigation and subsequent reformulation of landscape, and poetry that moves between the two. Through this model the contextual review will, in some way, reflect the creative and critical journey I have been on for the past three years.

To open, I engage with archival theory, both practical and philosophical. My investigations into these sites of knowledge, their development and arguments not only augmented my understanding of the cultural value of the Wilson Papers, but inspired new ways to engage with the material processes of the Cornwall Record Office. Crucially, the use of Derrida and his concept of the expanded archive influenced this investigation's understanding of Cornwall and landscape in general, and led to a model of inclusivity through conceptual relationships (i.e. landscape as sensorium) that widened this project's scope and inspired much of the creative work.

To provide context to my levels of landscape engagement, I offer here my exploration of the history and current condition of theories of landscape. Early reviewing of the work of cultural geography brought a new way to think about landscape beyond the immediate associations of view and land use. To understand Cornwall as a particular place, with its identity formed by landscape use and the cultural identity that can, at times, take a nationalist perspective, was an essential part of the many interviews I gathered and is thus

also reflected in my creative work. Furthermore, in reading how cultural geographers have used creative writing and appropriated and expanded the concept of archive, my own efforts to synthesise archive and landscape through poetry will be better understood.

Finally, my review of other poets who have written responses to archive material and to mined landscapes adds much to this framework of academic literature and theoretical detail. By outlining creative context and close-reading selected lines of poetry, I show how each poet has brought their own processes and poetic impulse to bear on these subjects. Obviously the poetry that has been examined below share themes with my own, but it is also the variety of approach and application of craft, unfolded in this chapter, that sites my own poetic engagement with archive and landscape amongst that of my peers.

In this review's consistent seeking of permission and possibility for my own work, it is to this last area, one of poetic investigation, I direct the reader's closest attention. Ultimately, and despite this project's associations with archival theory, sociology and human-historical and cultural geographies, it should not be forgotten that this thesis is a work of poetry and the emotional life of its reception.

## On Archives

### Practice

*Archives validate our experiences, our perceptions, our narratives, our stories.  
Archives are our memories. Yet what goes on in the archives remains remarkably  
unknown ...*

(Schwartz and Cook, 2002, 18)

Since the publication of Jacques Derrida's *Archive Fever* (1995), much philosophical discourse around the archive omits the details of archival practice. Schwartz and Cook (2002) open their discussion of archival power with this very point. 'While some writers have begun exploring aspects of "the archive" in a metaphorical or philosophical sense,' they complain, 'this is almost always done without even a rudimentary understanding of archives as real institutions' (2002: 2).<sup>1</sup> In this refusal of a more materialist critique, they promote the archivists' own development history of theories, practices and methodologies. I will now examine these before returning to Derrida.

The history of archiving is as long as the history of writing, as Williams (2006) makes clear: 'archival institutions develop naturally as cultures develop a written from an oral tradition and adopt the practice of recording information by "writing" on any receptive material' (2006: 21). Although some nineteenth-century European practice had been

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<sup>1</sup> Respected archivist Hugh A Taylor pointed out in 1969 that the English institution is called the Record Office, which reserves the word 'archives' for the documents (2003: 31). Taylor suggests that this difference denotes the different origins of the institution, where the British system originated to keep records of the courts, whereas more recent systems (such as the Canadian, for whom he is writing) were set up to 'accumulate the raw material of history' (2003: 33).

articulated, the first written work dedicated to the practice of archive management was *The Dutch Manual for the Arrangement and Description of Archives* (1898). This set out one hundred rules that had been debated by the Dutch Association of Archivists, and included descriptions of provenance and original order (Cook, 1997:21-22).

Nevertheless, many archive text books (see Ellis, 2004; Williams, 2006) begin their histories with Hilary Jenkinson (1880-1961), whose reformed archive practice in the UK<sup>2</sup> spread throughout the world (Jenkinson, 1980: 12). Jenkinson identified an archivist's supreme duty to be the moral and physical defence of the archive (Ellis, 2004: 10), and was passionate about the vocational aspect of the profession:

The archivist's career [...] is one of service. He exists in order to make other people's work possible, unknown people for the most part and working on lines equally unknown to him: some of them perhaps in the quite distant future[...] His Creed, the Sanctity of Evidence; His Task, the Conservation of every scrap of Evidence attaching to the Documents committed to his charge; his Aim, to provide, without prejudice or afterthought, for all those who wish to know the Means of Knowledge [...] The good Archivist is perhaps the most selfless devotee of Truth the modern world produces. (Jenkinson 1980: 259)

It is noteworthy that elements of patriarchal authority, so obvious to the contemporary reader concerned with discerning power relationships, receive an unconscious foreshadowing in Jenkinson's construction of the archivist as 'he.' Jenkinson's writing

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<sup>2</sup> For a full account of the development of the different British Record Offices see Iredale (1985).

promoted the (male) archivist as benevolent and passive, an idea challenged by much current thinking on the power of the archive (e.g. Schwartz and Cook, 2002; Harvey Brown and Davis-Brown, 1998). He also used the terms 'record' and 'archive' interchangeably, for he understood that archives were created organically in any transaction, and subsequently preserved. Strictly speaking, however, a record was only from a transaction resulting in a legal document produced by a court of record (Williams, 2006: 4).

The first theorist to articulate the difference between archives and records was Theodore Schellenberg (1903-1970), whose 1965 work *The Management of Archives* cemented his reputation as Jenkinson's successor in archival practice. He led a change in attitude towards records, cementing their definition as the product of a transaction with an on-going value, whereas archives are records with a *continuing* value, preserved for purposes other than those they had been created for, such as historical research (Williams, 2006: 4-5).

This division is made explicit in the first of two common management systems, the Life Cycle. This biological model tracks the course of a record's existence from gestation through its active life until it is discarded (dies) and is either destroyed (hell) or archived in 'heaven' (Williams, 2006: 10). This description can be read as both reassuring and troubling. The metaphor turns to the organic, the natural; and yet this cycle also promotes the archivist as a god-like figure, welcoming the worthy to eternal life. This model causes concern to historians such as Michael Moss, who wonders at the archivists' ability to 'remain immune to the demands of the enthusiasts and the pressure of information managers' in the process of selection (Moss, 2006: 965).

The consequent demarcation between the roles of record manager (a position held *inside* the creating institution, with all of its attendant pressures and politics) and the archivist is challenged by the second management system, called Continuum. This Australian model

was designed after a series of governmental scandals revealed the destruction of records (Cook 1997: 39), beginning with the Fitzgerald Inquiry of 1987-99. This inquiry led to the exposure of Queensland police corruption, suspect political donations and electoral manipulation being exposed, resulting in resignations, arrests and the change of governing party after thirty-two years in power (Garrard and Newell, 80).

The Continuum model responded to these events by representing record keeping as an on-going activity, which acknowledges the cross-over of the duties of the record-keeper and the archivist, and facilitates dialogue between the two roles (Williams, 2006: 13). Cook notes that it also updates the Jenkinsonian ideal of passive custodian to that of 'active interveners, even auditors, in the archival document continuum' (1997: 40), which brings further transparency and accountability.

Both models maintain the three core values of the archivist. These are: selection or appraisal, provision of access, and preservation and maintenance of the material (Williams 2006: 167). Under these values, archivists combine the secondary values of provenance and original order to form an overarching attitude known as *respect des fonds* (Millar, 2010: 101), where archives with different originators are not mingled and the original order of the document's use is honoured.

Selection is a paramount concern, both practically and politically; because of these processes, the archive becomes 'not a piece of data but a status' (Mbembe, 2002: 20), and as such is thus open to wider methods of cultural critique. Consequently, selection has been refined, rejecting the patriarchal state-centred model and replacing it with one based on the assertion that a society 'must be allowed to define its own core values and that these should be representatively mirrored through archival records' (Cook, 1997: 32).



Thus the UK (and others) is at present following a top-down appraisal system (rather than a 'bottom up' one which advocated the examination of each individual document). This design is based upon the realisation that archive value has often been defined by hierarchical structures or historiographical fashions. In response, this model argues for appraisal based upon social constructs and societal function, which cannot be directly measured by public opinion or societal analysis. Therefore this model preserves records that result from the functions of the major record creating institutions. Not only do these records detail the workings of the major institutions, but, due to these records often being created by transactions with the public, must show the realities of society at the time of creation (Cook, 1997: 32). This acquisition model is known as 'functional-structural macro-appraisal', where large-scale (macro) selections, rather than detailed document choices, are made, and it is the *functions* of the documents in the institution that are evaluated, not the documents themselves.

After selection, the second core value is provision of access. This not only marks the difference between a collection and an archive, but carries the ethical weight of the archive's existence. Codes for access were formally adopted in the EU in 2002. These stated that 'a country is not democratic till its inhabitants have the possibility of knowing their history' (cited in Williams, 2006, 123), which recognises the archive's role as primary source in the formation of cultural identity.

Both selection and access are underpinned by the third core value: the preservation and maintenance of material. It may appear obvious that an archivist should be concerned with the condition of their charges, and yet this is not as straightforward as it may first seem. Preservation is not the same as restoration or conservation, practices which may involve an altering of the document from the state in which it was received (although conservation can

be part of an archivist's duty, e.g. managing humidity of the storage area (Williams, 2006: 167)). Financial pressures and the needs of various media all come into tension with access. For example, photographic plates that are kept in cold storage will fog and deteriorate once removed for examination by visitors. The archivist must therefore negotiate these needs, balancing the three values as best they can, using trained judgement, experience and best practice.

It is clear that the development of the archive's material practice is alive with debate about its purpose, ethical position and epistemological frameworks, shifting towards an active auditing and post-custodial role (post-custodial in terms of the locational aspects of electronic records which may be held online, easily duplicated and accessed). The questions around what is collected or rejected still adumbrate the irresolvable problem of the archive, but this is constantly addressed in an evolving managerial ideology of 'best' practice. Indeed, it has been over a decade since Joan Schwartz and Terry Cook accused the profession of refusing to acknowledge the power inherent in archival practice, which risked future archival function (2002: 4-5). Historians and archivists are now sensitive to the charge of unheeding influence, such as that of:

scholars using archives without realizing the heavy layers of intervention and meaning coded into the records by their creators and by archivists long before any box is opened in the research room, and archivists treating their archives without much sensitivity to the large footprints they are themselves leaving on the archival record. Both scholars and archivists have thus had a vested interest in perceiving (and promoting) the archive as a value-free site of document collection and historical

inquiry, rather than a site for the contestation of power, memory, and identity (Schwartz and Cook, 2002: 4-5).

Their point, that closing your eyes does not make a problem go away, finds a response (although not an answer) in the macro-appraisal model described above, and in the continuing discourse around archives through the changing contexts of heritage and culture. Louise Craven details projects such as CASBAH (Caribbean Studies for Black and Asian History, 2000-2002) which located sources for Black and Asian history in the United Kingdom's libraries, media collections and archives (2008: 9). This is one demonstration of the use of archives in the promotion of identity, heritage and culture by funding bodies and policy makers (2008: 8). Craven goes on to suggest that, although there is no clear consensus about the meaning of identity across different disciplines and approaches, the archive profession needs to 'think about how it can gain an understanding of those crucially important cultural concepts, and how that understanding might shape practice enabling it to deliver audience development in light of identity, heritage and culture' (2008: 11). Thus the archivists' values of acquisition, access and preservation can be viewed as conduits to a desirably democratic cultural understanding. Ultimately, as M. Anne MacDermaid affirms, 'the essence of archival communication must remain the transmission of information encoded within the symbol, imparting a "sense of identity" while "making sense" for the recipient' (1992: 240). As I will demonstrate, this is also the goal of my creative work, produced in a framework of methodology where the complicated ideas of 'identity' and 'sense' have been explored. However, I will now return to Derrida's influence on the contemporary concept of archive and thus the direction of this thesis.

Much of the archive discourse detailed above exists in 'intimate tension' with deconstruction (Brothman, 1999: 82) through its careful use, or absolute rejection, of the work of Derrida. Brothman examines Derrida's unpopularity with archivists. In his provocatively titled work 'Declining Derrida: Integrity, Tensegrity and the Preservation of Archives from Deconstruction', Brothman proposes the following reasons for the profession's frustrations:

a traditional general lack of any sustained interest in philosophy in much of the archival community; the difficulty of reading Derrida's work; and the apparently irreconcilable differences between the postmodern concept of 'textuality,' which interests Derrida, and the qualities of 'recordness,' which concern archivists. (1999 64)

The field between these 'differences' – neatly resonant with *différance*, Derrida's own neographism that considers meaning through the act of delaying meaning – is more fully explored in the methodology section of this exegesis.<sup>3</sup>

Yet, despite some unwillingness on the part of archivists, any questioning of archive beyond the quotidian must reach towards the philosophy of Derrida, 'arguably the most radical interrogator of archive in the last decade of the twentieth century' (Hamilton, Harris, and Reid, 2002: 16). So in considering Derrida's archive it is useful to revisit his

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<sup>3</sup> Following other academic writings on Derrida in English I will henceforth use the anglicised 'différance'.

poststructuralist thinking, where the shape of the archive is found. In 'Force and Signification' Derrida criticises the 'defeat of force' (1993: 5) necessary in order to strip content, which he calls 'the living energy of meaning', in order to view structure. He suggests that this leaves the organisation of knowledge as 'like the architecture of an uninhabited or deserted city, reduced to its skeleton by some catastrophe of nature or art. A city no longer inhabited, not simply left behind, but haunted by meaning and culture' (1993: 5). Here, the city functions as a culture without archives. Evidence of culture is left on the landscape, and yet the agency, the energy of the present's understanding is removed, leaving form without meaning (Norris, 1987: 224). Without the archives, and particularly through the interpretation of meaning that deconstruction provides (for example, through the play of difference), the ability to read (or re-inhabit) the past is lost.

Difference is Derrida's coinage, using a French play on words to bring together to differ (spatial) and to defer (temporal), in order to keep meanings – hidden, overt, associative – alive. Difference works through the archive in two ways. First, it speaks to the use of the archive in the formation of meaning and identity. The same texts can be repeatedly read, revisited, cited, with each outcome simultaneously different and yet correct. The historian, the genealogist and the poet assign meaning which the archive supports, though never absolutely. The differences are equally valid, and so absolute meaning must be infinitely deferred.

Second, because difference affects the whole sign (both the signifying and signified aspects) it is a complete relationship that manages to exist in a network, much as an archive's structure does. Each document is held in tension, in a moment between the archive's need to give (access) and to keep (preserve). Freudian psychoanalysis energises Derrida's arguments, and it is helpful to recall difference explained in terms of memory

production: 'All the differences involved in the production of unconscious traces and in the process of inscription (*Niederschrift*) can also be interpreted as moments of differance, in the sense of 'placing on reserve' (1993: 293). This delay between the trace and the inscription into a substrate transmutes into the Freudian psychoanalytical model described in *Archive Fever*, where the need to keep (to archive) is in tension with the need to erase (anarchive, or manifestation of the death drive).

Derrida presented *Archive Fever* as a lecture to a colloquium on memory and archives organised through the Freud Museum. He uses Freudian psychoanalytical terminology to conceptualise the archive, and promotes the inscription of memory into the psychological substrate (for which Freud provided the metaphor of the Mystic Pad, a child's toy tablet upon which any writing seemed to disappear) as a model for the material archive. Writing is removed from the immediate and taken to an external place designed for the depositing of memory. Through this process of relocation, the archive becomes a memory prosthesis which, the argument continues, is in tension with the need (again, psychological and social) to forget, without which there could be no progression into the future. As Derrida explains, 'The archive—the good one—produces memory, but produces forgetting at the same time' (2002: 54).

In so much as archives (de)construct knowledge, Derrida's work on archives culminated in, rather than was limited to, his work in *Archive Fever*.<sup>4</sup> As Verne Harris suggests, 'in a sense all Derrida's work is about the archive. He converses with it, mines it, interrogates it, extends it, creates it, imagines it and is imagined by it' (2002: 61). Yet *Archive Fever* is not

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<sup>4</sup> See Harris (2005) for an account of Derrida's influence on archival theory and a discussion of 'the most common misconceptions', beginning with 'Derrida wrote a book about archives titled *Archive Fever*' (133).

obviously concerned with the material practice of archive keeping. Carol Steedman addresses this with her characteristic frankness:

Many English-speaking readers—this one, too—have assumed that *Archive Fever* has something to do with archives (rather than with psychoanalysis, or memory, or finding things) [...] But commentators have found remarkably little to say about record offices, libraries and repositories, and have been brought face to face with the ordinariness, the unremarkable nature of archives, and the everyday disappointments that historians know they will find there (2001: 9).

Instead, *Archive Fever* problematises the concept of archive (as a structure of memory and therefore knowledge) using Freudian theory as a template and, simultaneously, as a mode of interrogation. Through Derrida's careful excavations and applications, he argues that the theory of psychoanalysis 'becomes a theory of the archive and not only a theory of memory' (1996: 19).

The role of the death drive is an essential part of the Freudian concept of archive, and therefore of Derrida's, who writes: '[w]ithout this evil, which is also archive fever, the desire and the disorder of the archive, there would be neither assignation nor consignation' (1997: 81). Thus the urge to destroy self is managed by the archiving of memory, which in turn results in the ability to assemble knowledge structures by naming and sorting, to consign or 'gather signs' (Derrida, 1996: 3) together to make the archive itself. Finally recognised as a corpus made up of signs (of assignation and consignations), the Derridean archive resolves itself into a field of relation, a semantically-associated structure that is driven by difference.

Modelling the archive in these terms is liberating, but perhaps too much so, even if an interdisciplinary need for a broader definition of archive has been identified (Cresswell, 2011: 175). As Harriet Bradley points out, the Derridean archive is 'potentially infinite, eternally unclosed, spiralling into an uncertain future' (1999: 108). The phrase 'eternally unclosed' seems particularly apposite when read alongside Derrida's suggestion that:

the interpretation of the archive [...] can only illuminate, read, interpret, establish its object, namely a given inheritance, by inscribing itself into it, that is to say by opening it and by enriching it enough to have a rightful place in it. There is no meta-archive. (1996: 67)

The Boulton and Watt archive therefore already contains this thesis's poetry as well as any future poems or articles not-yet-written.

Through deconstruction, the archive proliferates into multiple readings and conceptions of 'archive'. However, Derrida insists that deconstruction 'doesn't consist simply in multiplying interpretations [...] is something else than simply this relativistic activity' (2002: 58). Following Bradley (1999: 108) I would suggest that the deconstructed archive, rather than disappearing or dissolving into a game of free association, manages to hold its shape in terms of 'memory, the past, narrative' (1999: 108), which are three essential elements of this thesis.



## Locating the Archive

Thomas Osborne has promoted the archive as a centre of interpretation, one which allows those who use it to oscillate between literalism and idealism. For him, these opposites (which are also found co-existing in the 'best-practice' of archive managers ) come together in places such as courts of law, centres for humanities and psychotherapeutic encounters; each of which are interpretable by society as symptoms of society (1999: 51-52). As such, the archive is a place where society locates its values and, therefore, its identity. This is achieved through the use of what Osborne calls 'real history' (the construction of a past based on evidence from primary sources), yet it also encourages consideration of the sociology of power. 'For those who work in the historical disciplines,' writes Osborne, 'the archive is akin to the laboratory of the natural scientist' (1999: 52). Taking this imagery of investigation and experimentation further, I would suggest that the archive also encourages a creative application that pushes beyond the realities of the strong room, to fill the gap between practical tool and cultural metaphor of memory. As Osborne suggests: 'surely what makes the notion [of archive] really useful is its very elasticity; that it goes beyond such a literal reference, or that it can be used to do so' (1999: 52). This position is supported by the work of academics from historical and cultural geography who are finding new, creative ways to engage with archives (see Dwyer and Davies, 2010), promoting the view that archives are now seen as 'contingent, messy and permeable' (Cresswell, 2011: 166).

So the problem, and perhaps the permission, of this use of archive does not lie in the obvious space between theory-of-practice and that practice. As Cook points out, 'It is important for the [archival] profession to remember that the opposite of practical is impractical, not theoretical' (cited in Abraham, 2012). Instead, and following Cook's

thought, this new and creative use of the archive is sited in a hinterland, with archival theory and practice on one side and theory-of-concept on the other. It is found in the re-reading of *Archive Fever*, with an eye to the archival practice cited above, and in close reading of scholars who attempt to reconcile the tangible archive with Derrida's use of 'the Freudian impression' to model (and trouble) such concepts as memory, forgetting, and the categorisations of historiographical knowledge.<sup>5</sup> Finally, it is found between the strong room's physicality and those more abstract qualities of identity, memory, landscape and narrative to which it provides access.<sup>6</sup> This is where this thesis stakes its creative location, though expanded through assignation, consignment, presence and absence, and stretched with Osborne's 'elasticity' (1999: 52). Importantly, however, it cannot, and does not, lose touch—albeit gloved—with the letters of Boulton and Watt.

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<sup>5</sup> See Helen Freshwater's 'Allure of the Archive' for a full account of a historian negotiating the archive's perceived 'continual oscillation between the poles of thing and theory' (2003: 752).

<sup>6</sup> 'The language of deconstruction is inherently geographical: it utilizes imagery of spaces, flows, intensities, contiguities and (as geographers have always done) contemplates how things have come to be situated' (Shurmer-Smith, 2002: 43)

## On Landscape

*Landscape is tension. The term precisely denotes the tensions through which subject and object, self and world, find their measure, balance and attenuation; their coils and recoil, proximity and distance. The whole value of landscape now lies in this tension and this precision.* (Wylie, 2006: 465)

This project has been funded by the European Social Fund to work with the Cornish landscape, to bring together its historical and its contemporary use through consideration of the Boulton and Watt archive. It is therefore necessary to connect with the material Cornwall before any further exploration can take place.

### Where (and what) is Cornwall?

Cornwall is the south-western tip of Great Britain. The physical attributes of its landscape/geomorphology have guided its cultural development for 2500 years (Knight and Harrison, 2013: 193). To begin with, it is a county with only one border, which largely consists of the River Tamar. The source of the river is only 6km from the north coast, but because it flows southwards it almost completely separates Cornwall from the rest of England. Cornwall, it seems, is almost an island. This geographical boundary is useful to those who claim Cornwall, already recognised as a Celtic nation, as a separate country (see Rowe and Nute, 2012).

The occurrence of Cornish nationalism draws much of its vigour from this ethnic regional identity. East of the Tamar is Anglo-Saxon, a demarcation reinforced by the Cornish landscape of difference. As Philip Payton suggests, 'for some this landscape [of engine

houses and their surrounds] had become an icon of ethnic identity' (1996: 11). Patrick Laviolette agrees that the Cornish assertion of ethnic difference is:

grounded in various elements of landscape and material culture. These relate for instance to foodstuffs, religion, sport, Celtic imagery and ritual, industrial and seafaring traditions. (2003: 218)

The particular industrial landscape elements are essential to the Cornish sense of place, as Hilary Orange's investigation reveals. For her respondents it was clear that 'the Crowns' engine houses at Bottallack or the iconic sites such as Wheal Coates at St Agnes *are* Cornwall' (2011: 108).

Cornwall, however, is one of the poorest economic regions in the UK. In recognition of this, the region was awarded the European Union's Objective Level One funding in 1999, and is now receiving follow-up funding for projects aimed at improving prosperity. Cornwall's economic difficulties are the result of the loss of industry, coupled with the seasonal (and unpredictable) tourism market, and have been linked to its socio-political marginality (Laviolette, 2003: 218). This poverty, like the industry before it, has left its mark upon the contemporary post-industrial landscape, as Orange records:

The de-industrialisation of Cornwall's tin and copper mining industry and the subsequent transition to an economy largely dependent on tourism has inevitably brought many changes—from noise to quiet, from an emphasis on subterranean to the surface, and from physical exertion to a visual consideration of industrial ruins

within a 'natural' setting. These changing perceptions have occurred within recent history and therefore, in a large part, within living memory (Orange, 2011: 99).

The intention (in part) of this thesis is to capture these changing perceptions in interviews and reflect them in the creative work.

Recent Cornish Studies scholarship indicates that traditional components of the Cornish landscape, including rurality and unspoilt natural beauty, are being 'supplemented by a recognition and appreciation of Cornwall's (post) industrial landscape', with some seeking to reclaim this landscape as a significant facet of their Celtic Cornish identity (Harvey, 2001: 9), an identity that was officially recognised with minority status in the third year of this project.<sup>7</sup> Landscape accommodates these formative ideas of local/national identity whilst also responding to the presence of the visitor, the tourist or the retiree because landscape is the visual consequence of community, 'the by-product of people working and living, sometimes coming together, sometimes staying apart, but always recognising their interdependence' (Brinckerhoff, 1984: 12). This idea of landscape construction through human interdependence is particularly useful when dealing with ethnicity-based claims upon landscape and its uses. The formation of identity, when paralleled with the construction of landscape, provides ways to respond to nationalist or ethnicist readings that problematically lay claim to the 'natural'.

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<sup>7</sup> This was announced on the 24<sup>th</sup> April 2014 ("Cornish granted minority status", 2014).

## Landscape, Post-Industrial

Frequently, texts that work with landscape open with the word's etymology (e.g. Brinckerhoff, 1984; Spirin, 1998; Whelan, 2014) or feel pressed to acknowledge its mutability, for example: 'clearly landscape is an ambiguous term, and we will not be providing any definitive definition of it here' (Barnes and Duncan, 1992: 4). This ambiguity is useful for creative flexibility, as it permits a variety of approaches. Farley and Roberts' use of the term in *Edgelands* supports my use of it throughout this thesis: '[f]rom its etymological beginnings in English, landscape has been very much a part of human culture: something that includes nature, rather than something that is wholly consistent of it' (2011: 26). Tim Cresswell asserts that 'We do not live in landscapes – we look at them' (2004: 11); however, this thesis is definite in its use of 'landscape' rather than 'place'; here using the term to define the area affected, and effected, by the coming together of the natural and the cultural that mining embodies. Landscape's status as a social and cultural product (Cosgrove, 1984) is then a concept far beyond any immediate association of, for example, visual art's representation of the rural.

Positioning landscape in this way serves three purposes. First, cultural geography's investigations into landscape provide much useful thinking to this project's design, which I outline below. Second, as a familiar continuance from the term 'post-industrial' I believed it suited the interview element by not confusing my interviewees. Third, and most important, 'landscape' always suggests the presence of an interactor, who may not be as passive as Cresswell, above, would suggest. For, as Denis Cosgrove makes clear, the word always connotes the relationship between the humans and their environment:

Landscape is a uniquely valuable concept for a humane geography. Unlike place it reminds us of our position in the scheme of nature. Unlike environment or space it reminds us that only through human consciousness and reason is that scheme known to us, and only through technique can we participate as humans in it. At the same time landscape reminds us that geography is everywhere, that it is a constant source of beauty and ugliness, of right and wrong and joy and suffering, as much as it is profit and loss (2008: 179).

Cosgrove's binaries (and all the differences in between) are applicable in the creation of the Cornish landscape, expressed through narratives, private and public, physical and temporal.<sup>8</sup> Different levels of ownership and understanding are re-presented by the heritage sites such as King Edward Mine Museum, and accessed through the leisure pursuits encouraged on the Mineral Tramways network.

The landscape over the Tamar, therefore, begins with the geological peculiarities that made deep-lode metal mining so profitable. It is the matrix into which Boulton, Watt and other participants in this correspondence sent their letters, facilitating transactions for machinery which gave the means to mine deeper than ever before. The mining created tips,

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<sup>8</sup> For an interesting discussion of place and community, see Doreen Massey's 'A Global Sense of Place' (1997). In this, she argues that identifying place with community is problematic, for communities can exist across different places and 'communities' in the sense of homogenous social groups in one location are rare. She goes on to say, '[m]oreover, even when they do exist this in no way implies a single sense of place. [...] I am sure a woman's sense of place in a mining village – the spaces through which she normally moves, the meeting places, the connection outside – are different from a man's. Their 'sense of place' will be different' (1997: 316). For my work, I found that by asking such women to talk to me in and about the landscape and their everyday experiences I accessed stories of these spaces/places, agreeing with Claval (2007) who maintains that 'landscape remains an important medium through which to interrogate the construction of identity and the politicisation of space' (87).

waste heaps, and the engine house (roofed and smoking), which have been cleared, cleaned or repaired, leading to an increase in the value of Cornish mining heritage (Orange, 2011: 100). Now, the prominent landscape features include mining trails, heritage attractions such as King Edward Mine Museum, and the engine houses, (ruined and cold).

Many of these developments have been supported by the landscape's re-classification, for, in 2006, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisations (UNESCO) designated much of the county as 'Cornwall and West Devon Mining Landscape World Heritage Site' in recognition of the worldwide importance of the Cornish mines and mining technology. It celebrates Cornwall's value beyond the picturesque, as a historically vibrant and educational place to visit. Promotional material makes these claims in no uncertain terms: 'The World Heritage Site has many exciting mining heritage attractions across Cornwall and West Devon which together enable the visitor to experience the full breadth of the Cornish mining story' (Bradbury, 2011). The ideological difference between heritage, defined as the use (often a reimagining) of the past in the present (Whelan, 2014b: 179; Porter, 2008: 268), and history is perfectly illustrated in Bradbury's use of the word 'story'. This, alongside the assertion that the 'story' can be fully 'experienced', collapses past-present problematically by suggesting that the past really is accessible, and not just our selected interpretations. Such tensions as these, between celebration and commoditisation, informed this project's creative output, with poems that sometimes support, sometimes undermine the dominant landscape narratives, depending upon the sources used.

This pattern of industrial-heritage promotion fits the model proposed by Wolfram Hofer and Vera Vincencetti in their cross-cultural (European and American) comparison on the reuse of brownfield sites (2013). Here, the sites of former industry are 'interpreted as a new form of cultural landscape' (2013: 408). They identified three discursive traditions in Europe



(predominantly Germany). These are: idealisation of the former industry, the discovery of the specific flora and fauna of these sites, and the subsequently ascribed idea of wilderness. (2013: 406). Although their studies were focused on industrial sites that are found in urban areas and their surrounds, these three discourses are immediately recognisable in the rhetoric concerning the Cornish post-industrial landscape, where, for example, idealisation of previous industry and promotion of the natural environment are prominent components of the Mineral Tramways network and the National Trust coastal path. However, I will now deal with each of these three more fully, beginning with the idealisation of former industry.

To cross the Tamar into Cornwall is to step into a region defined by previous industrial activities and the effects of their cessation, even in areas without mines themselves (such as Bodmin, or St Austell's Clay Country). However, this thesis found its focus further west, in areas most notably formed by mining activities. Most of the work took place in and around the ex-mining towns of Camborne and Redruth, where it is most evident that the mining industry, although closed, is still providing income. This is not only through tourist interest, but through heritage and culture grants, which allays any fear that a sanitised 'tourist gaze' would not be interested in viewing any traces of industry on the 'picturesque' Cornish landscape (Hale, 2001: 188).

Mining history plays a vital role in the formation of a Cornish identity (Payton, 1996; Orange, 2011), and its idealisation is profitable, culturally and financially. Recently Cocks (2013) has identified increased community awareness of how the Cornish historic environment can act as a catalyst for the regeneration of run-down urban centres. He cites recent streets improvement works in St Just and the planned development of the historic front of Holman's No. 3 Rock Drill Works as examples of how the World Heritage Site status is attracting much-needed investment to the area.

However, this is not unproblematic. In their 1998 paper, Kennedy and Kingcome outlined concerns that a 'semi-fictional past' was being created for tourist consumption, where repackaging of Cornish history into 'Holiday/Heritage Cornwall' can be understood in terms of Baudrillard's postmodern critique of Disneyland's tangle of simulation (1998: 45). More recently, the poets Paul Farley and Michael Symmons Roberts have observed that 'The heritage industry tends to rely on a kind of freeze-framing of time in order to present the tourist and visitor with a reordered, partial, tidied-up account of what happened at any particular site (2012: 157). This relates back to the impossible 'experience' of Bradbury, and is an idea to which I return in my reading of Andrew Forster's poem 'The Miner's Library' (2010: 18) in the creative practice review section of this exegesis.

A further complication in this regard is the dissent around who a heritage tourist is, how to measure their motivations in visiting a particular site, and how to divide consumers and producers into measurable groups (Porter, 2008: 269–70). Visitors who engage with Cornish mining history might not have such pursuits at the top of their agenda when choosing a holiday destination, but merely decide to fill a day at the mining museum or on the leisure trails; furthermore, my interviews have shown that those who live here are just as passionate consumers of heritage tourism sites as the most dedicated visitor from 'up country'.

In terms of flora and fauna, the processes of deep lode mining meant that (around the sprawling and noisy plants themselves) the ground above was often left undisturbed. This disguised the industrial sites as appealingly rural areas, which allowed plants and animals to thrive. It is true that some locations still display contaminated areas of bare ground, but these have been overcome by Cornwall's tenacious biodiversity and are now promoted as special sites for wildlife (Spalding, 1995: 169; Turk, 1995: 148).

Finally, the idea of post-industrial wilderness is applicable, particularly on the north coast. An easy route leads explorers from the preserved and busy-functioning Geevor mine to the bare-chimneyed, stripped and contaminated Levant (figure 2). From there, they can reach the iconic Crown's engine house at Bottallack, still bravely balanced above the sea (figure 3).



*Figure 2: Danger sign at Levant*



*Figure 3: Crown's engine house at Bottallack*

Hofer and Vincencetti cite the deliberate transformation of the declined Ruhr region in Germany into 'a cultural landscape of the future' (Ganser, 1999, cited in Hofer and Vincencetti, 2013: 407). This echoes the Heartlands promotional tagline of '19 acres of cultural candy', which was written on large boards around the site in 2013. Heartlands is a development resulting from the reclamation and reformation of Robinson's shaft and ex-mining site, located in Pool, one of Cornwall's poorest and least attractive areas. This deeply problematic phrase, which immediately asked to be critiqued in terms of the Baudrillardian framework proposed by Kennedy and Kingcombe (1998), prompted local questions as to whether the site was more theme park than heritage site (Cornwall24, 2013: n.p.). The

confusion lies in the fact that Heartlands is not a museum, although it has exhibitions and attractions in its visitor centre. Rather, it uses mining history as a starting point for cultural development and community gains. They describe this goal on their website:

Situated at Robinson's Shaft, the site is part of the Cornwall and West Devon Mining Landscape World Heritage Site and is of great historic significance. Heartlands respects and builds on this history, but looks to the future by combining economic, social, environmental and cultural development in a balanced and sustainable way. (heartlandscornwall.com, n.d.)

Heartlands is one attempt to bring together the post-industrial landscape and the cultural future of Cornwall beyond mining heritage, yet its foundation is firmly (and literally) in this past industry. Thus not all of the Cornish mining heritage is being statically preserved; it is also being used to project a cultural future for the area.

### Landscape as Language, Landscape as Text

The reading of landscape as language or text became instrumental in the way this project first engaged with this Cornish post-industrial landscape, in an effort to negotiate the vernacular of the industrial, urban and the domestic. As geographer Yvonne Whelan suggests, 'statues, street names, public buildings and urban planning projects each [serve] as sites of memory and meaning' (Whelan, 2014: 165). Interviews with those who live in, work in and visit this landscape provide the first access point into this collection of texts, where the stories of statues and street names were initially gathered.

To develop these gathered narratives required me to form an understanding of the physical, as well as cultural, by experiencing the physical remainders of the mining industry. Through becoming familiar with places designated as beautiful, as one of my participants pointed out, I could become sensitive to their small changes. This is the creative act of landscape scrutiny that Meinig (1984) seeks to promote in his fellow geographers. Thus through writing in a cold engine house, cycling the mineral tramways, or daring to step onto the grid of a capped shaft, I encountered a landscape which, while overtly encouraging historical interpretation, eventually became subject to multiple readings (Cresswell, 1996: 13). These readings then became part of my poetry, where the conflation of landscape and language generated individual and particular versions of itself.

Likewise, in her 1999 book, *Language of Landscape*, Ann Whiston Spirn bases her ideas on the equivalences found between language and landscape:

Landscape has all the features of language. It contains the equivalent of words and parts of speech—patterns of shape, structure, material, formation, and function. [...]  
Landscape is pragmatic, poetic, rhetorical, polemical. Landscape is the scene of life, cultivated construction, carrier of meaning. (1998: 15)

Spirn is a professor of landscape architecture and her meditations are written as guidance for the designer who would learn landscape's language to be able to 'speak' it with sensitivity. She is not offering an autochthonic model of landscape and language here, but instead keeps the cultural/natural divide evident. However, she is also concerned with maintaining a level of comprehension that allows humans to relate their stories. Although she engages with practitioners who use words to tell of the landscape's stories, her work is

more concerned with the use of landscape as language, e.g. paths as stories (1999: 49), suggesting that reading the landscape discloses both what has been and what is to come, for:

history can be deciphered in the shape of valley and hill, field and fence. [...]

Ambiguity—layers of landscape meaning—and the metaphors and paradoxes it engenders are a source of rich material for reading and telling. (2004: 27)

Although somewhat simplistic in its claim that a community's history can be found in topography (for surely more than one community creates landscape, and the presence of a dominant narrative does not preclude the existence of others) this 'reading and the telling' goes some way to describe this project's creative engagement with the Cornish landscape.

Landscape as language provides the theoretical underpinning of a more established idea: landscape as text. This has been a useful mode of landscape engagement for cultural geographers, popular until the recent non-representational turn, which seeks body-based, rather than textually-mediated, modes of landscape engagement (Wylie, 2007: 162).

Timothy Oakes and Patricia Price trace the origins of landscape-as-text to poststructuralist literary theories from the 1980s, which prompted cultural geographers to highlight the diverse ways that landscapes could be read. Oakes and Price point out that '[r]ather than possessing one unitary meaning that the cultural geographer painstakingly uncovers, diverse individuals and groups in society might well read the same landscape in profoundly different ways' (2008: 177).

John Wylie's *Landscape* (2007) dedicates a chapter to 'Ways of Seeing' (2007: 55-91), in which he examines the idea that landscape may be metaphorically engaged with as text. Wylie outlines the interpretative debt this position promotes:

Who is it that has written the landscape? Which individuals or groups are its principal authors? What is the narrative of the landscape, what story does it tell? Does the landscape have just one plot, or is it composed of many overlapping and even competing storylines? Equally, the landscape as text obviously requires a readership, an audience, in order to come alive. But how will the landscape be read? (2007: 70-71).

As if in answer to this last question, Cosgrove (2008) instructs the cultural geographer who would read landscape as text. The required methods, he suggests, are challenging and rigorous, but not problematically esoteric, for they are techniques already being practised in the humanities, where 'a close, detailed reading of the text [gives] us the landscape in all its expressions' (2008: 181). These 'readings' are achieved through fieldwork, where tasks of map making and interpretation bring a deep and personal knowledge of the landscape.

Cosgrove seeks to balance this highly individualised knowledge with an essential critical distance, provided by historical and contextual knowledge. This idea of landscape scrutiny through close attention, morphological scaling and representation through interpretation speaks to the poetic strategies employed in my work, where the polysemous landscape was approached through repeated readings. In addition, Cosgrove's balancing historical and contextual function is supplied by the Boulton and Watt archive, where readings (and



writings) between landscape and archive provide the spatio-temporal resonance required in the creative work.

Landscape as text also offers a further benefit in terms of postmodern intertextuality. This incorporates into landscape reading 'the knowledge that an existing body of material and other readings has inevitably influenced the current reading' (Robertson and Richards, 2003: 5). The discovery of the Cornish landscape through interview and observation unavoidably (and, for this work, essentially) reflects the culture of the landscape interpreter (both interviewees and researcher). This poststructural approach is recently found in heritage and landscape management practice, in order to 'allow a more fluid history to be presented—one that takes into account a variety of stories' (Aitchison et al, 2000: 102).

As a final point for this section, the work of Trevor Barnes and James Duncan describes landscape texts as constitutive of discourse. (1992: 9) Discourses can exist alongside each other even when disputed: this returns us to the democratic use of the archive, as examined in the contextual review on the archival principle of access.

### Cultural Geography and Creative Writing

The above discussion touches several examples of cultural and human geography's use of writing that borders upon, or becomes fully, creative. This deliberate employment sees metaphor, simile (and indeed poetry) used to represent and relate the writer's experience of landscape. Because of this, some teachers have promoted the use of creative writing as a necessary pedagogical focus in the training of student geographers, landscape architects and planners (See Cresswell, 2014: 142, and Palmer, 2010: 175). John Wylie (himself an expressive landscape writer) suggests that this type of writing best suits landscape

phenomenology, as it allows Merleau-Ponty's idea of being 'caught in the fabric of the world' to be 'most aptly and powerfully articulated via literary or poetic (or artistic) registers, rather than perhaps more sober, clinical or analytical language' (2010: 52). Wylie describes his own practice as a blend between critical and creative writings, 'at once scholarly and story-like' (2010b: 212). Furthermore, John Wylie's sustained interest in how phenomenological engagement with landscape can be textually characterised adds weight to this project's poetic mode of enquiry. He suggests that the experiences landscape phenomenology work with are 'in part "poetic" in nature, or at least demand to be voiced in the language of poesis', which reaches towards 'a fusion of experience and expression' (2010:47).

Although my poetry works with moments from archival work, donated narratives and landscape interaction, it takes inspiration, and much of its geographical confidence, from these mixed verbal, written and observed sources. Hayden Lorimer's experimental commentary 'The Geographical Field Course as Active Archive' is particularly pertinent, continuing the exploration of 'small stories' collected in the biographical records of a geography fieldtrip (Lorimer, 2003a: passim), arguing that fieldwork and research strategies can be understood as 'an unfinished and active archive that speaks of the localized, everyday conditions in which geography's history is made' (2003b: 278). Lorimer's work brought together the archive of the field course with the living memory of Margaret, who had attended the course in 1951. In encouraging their exploration of these interweaving narratives, Lorimer offered his current students examples of 'more social, (and possibly emotional) modes of speaking as a methodological technique' (2003b: 296).

## Cultural Geography's Expanded Use of Archives

Wylie has suggested that one future direction for elements of cultural geography could be a closer move towards the arts, not only working with artists but by conceptualising the practice as creative writing, performance and other artistic fields (2010b: 212). Recent interventions in archives and work around the expanded concept or field of relation includes Rose, 2000; DeSilvey, 2007; Yusoff, 2008; and Driver and Jones, 2009, and each approach the concept of archive in a different way. For example, before performing her own archive of artefacts found in a derelict Montana house, Caitlin DeSilvey initially considered art installations around archives (Hiller, 1994; Kabakov, 1993) 'to become receptive to how archival memory might be reworked, reflexively and critically'. This added an additional artistic dimension to her memory-work project, which functioned 'down the margin between art and archive' (DeSilvey, 2007: 898).

DeSilvey's work can be seen as a proponent of the work of Tim Cresswell, the poet geographer whose work moves between poetry, archives and landscape. There is an element of wilful misreading of what makes an archive when Cresswell writes '[t]he archive is a particular kind of place where objects are valued' (2011: 168) for, as we have seen above, an archive only holds records. He states that the holding of documents and images is 'leakier and messier' (2011: 175). For Cresswell, such leakage brings such institutions as museums, galleries and private collections of material goods under the concept of archive. Thus the expanded archive is being used in other disciplines, which, instead of taking their starting place from deconstruction, work on the somewhat simpler principle that '[i]n the process of gathering that which is valued, an archive comes into being' (2011: 166).

This idea is outlined in his notable study, 'Maxwell Street', in which he constructs an 'archive of place' around a threatened local amenity (2011: 165). This research provides a strong example of how the idea of an archive can become the principle around which temporal, spatial and political organisation occurs. Indeed, Cresswell touches on the edges of my work with the Cornish landscape by writing that he considers Maxwell Street Market as a kind of living archive (2011: 166) 'distributed across multiple sites that bleed into each other' (2011: 174) and is 'certainly more inclusive than formal archives, including as it does old pieces of wood or fabric, mundane receipts and other elements of the life of the market' (2011: 174). In utilising the concept of the expanded archive, Cresswell brings questions of history and identity to disrupt the authority of the decision to tear the market down.

Hayden Lorimer's work also details a cultural geographer working at the edges of archives. The two articles published in 2003 attempt to gain a cross-temporal creative perspective, and to allow the shifts between 'different scales of inquiry' of the inanimate and the institutions, Lorimer expands the concept of archive (2003a: 200.) This, he argues, grants access to an assortment of 'small stories' with which he is working, 'acknowledging [his] own increasingly purposeful attempts to assemble, preserve and re-create' (2003a: 199), and to search for wider connections to the debates of geography's history. In this way he is using an expanded archive to resonate with contemporary narratives, for '[c]onstellations of sites, subjects, experiences and sources from both past and present are, I contend, one means to embrace a creative biographical dimension in geographical research' (2003a: 2000). Although my research is not geographical (as in its major outputs are creative) there is an obvious connection between my work and Lorimer's thinking here.

By their consideration of the small story, the uncollected artefact, it is clear that many of these interventions have been made to challenge the archive's patriarchal authority through

the collection of living voices. These projects seek to find the stories not preserved, to privilege the uncollected and to 'read against the grain' (Cresswell, 2011: 166). For example, human geographer Kay Anderson (1999) manages to convey the multiplicity of narrative present in the Redfern area of Sydney (a place that is primarily, and negatively, identified with 'Aboriginality') by weaving direct quotations from research participants with the results of her own archival (and expanded archival) research. She describes 'the so-called field of field-work' as something 'mobile' (1999: 69), and uses her methods to 'distil some imagining [...] that was alert to all perspectives and positioning' (1999: 69). Consequently, she created a piece of writing that, whilst theoretical and academic, uses imagination and narrative to argue for Redfern to be understood as a hybrid space of porous and fluid identities (Mansvelt and Berg, 2010: 350). Anderson's research in Redfern has obvious connection to my own methodologies and aims, but her work is not poetry. I will now contextualise my work alongside poets who have worked with, or between, landscape and archives.

## Creative Context

While reading for this contextual review, my driving sense was the seeking of allies. To find poets working in the same mode of investigation, or on a similar subject, was always a joyful experience. It was by reading the work of my peers that I was introduced to the sensitive, yet playful, use of historical documents, and the value of poetic exploration of regions in the UK that have had their ground and structures altered by the mineral processing industry.

The poets selected for inclusion (and there could have been many more) bring modes of selection, process, and creative exploration to the archive-in-landscape (Alice Oswald, Justin Hopper), the archive proper (Susan Howe, Catherine Bowman) and to the archive-in-name (Joshua Poteat). Peter Riley's work moves between excavation/archive and the particular mined landscape of Derbyshire, whereas Andrew Forster writes of the post-mining area of Leadhills in Scotland. Finally, Leanne O'Sullivan's work on the copper-mined West Cork landscape is examined.

This section is written not only as a contextualising survey of the field, but as a continuation of the previous discussions. Reading (and hearing) the work of poets whose works approximate my own has been part of my creative practice; therefore all of these related writings should be understood as part of the expanded archive that encompasses Cornwall, its people and my own poetry. In writing of, and through, these works I offer more evidence to support my use of Derrida's theoretical archive, which spreads itself through 'a technique of repetition' (1996: 14) and brings inside itself all related writings. The expanded archive, I argue, does not differentiate between material replication and poetic inspiration.

Thus these selected works are drawn into the archive by their shared subjects and modes of meditation, either upon a particular archive or the post-industrial (particularly post-

mining) landscape. This chapter will offer close readings of particular poems to establish how these writers negotiated similar tasks to 'Poetry and the Archive', and also indicate where the study of these works influenced my own experiments in coalescing archive, community and landscape work.

Alice Oswald's poetry often works with the syntheses of these three elements. Moreover, Oswald's work aligns with the landscape-as-text reading of Cornwall discussed above, for she 'often presents—in concordance with post-structural theory—the earth as already imbricated in language' (Armstrong, 2009: 189). Furthermore, Oswald used archival resources and community-based investigations to write *A Sleepwalk on the Severn*, commissioned for the 2009 Severn project and subsequently published by Faber to critical acclaim.<sup>9 10</sup> The work provided a framework for the generation of creative work by artists, musicians, theatre (both street and stage) and community groups during the Severn Festival, which had 'significant impacts in raising community and landscape awareness' (Jones, 2009: 3) through its sustained celebration of the landscape and the people who live, work and holiday in the area.

*A Sleepwalk on the Severn's* setting is night on the Severn estuary. Its focus is moonrise, which takes place five times, each time in a different stage of the moon's cycle. The poem

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<sup>9</sup> Gloucestershire Archives were part of this multi-agency art project and provided Oswald with a twelve-page (Gloucester Archives, 2014, n.p.) document of examples from their records that related to the River Severn (National Archives, 2013: 16). These sources were added to by Oswald's own interviews of community members to inspire and shape the voices that move through the poem. It is interesting to note that Oswald's sources, found for her, negated the need for the poet to do more than 'a day or two' following up points of interest in the archive (personal communication with Gloucester Archives (2014)). This could explain the lack of archive apologia with its 'showing of work', as noted below in the poetry of Howe and Bowman.

<sup>10</sup> The scope of influence of *A Sleepwalk on the Severn* was both large and lasting, not least because the publication of the poem by Faber made the work widely available, as did the subsequent adaptation as a radio drama for BBC Radio 4.

comprises many different voices (for example, the moon, birdwatcher and vicar). However, Oswald insists that 'This is not a play. This is a poem in several registers' (2009: 2), significantly structuring the work in terms of both lyric and narrative polyvocality. As the preface states, '[v]arious characters, some living, some dead, all based on real people from the Severn catchment, talk towards the moment of moonrise and are changed by it' (2009: 2). This, the preface tells us, is a poem of inclusion, where joint purpose leads to jointly-experienced effects.

The use of the moon as an organising principle allows the poet to simultaneously create and relate the night-users of the river, each one responsive to the moon's changing state and its influence on water. The woman with epilepsy, for example, walks the 'moony river paths/ Watching with a growing eye/ The riffs and rags of moths' (2009: 28). The wind, taking on the voice of a suicide by drowning, tells of seeing the moon 'wandering asleep amongst the mudflats' (2009: 13). Each character expresses their own history with, and through, the river. Their stories enliven its natural features and the life that surrounds it.

The non-human landscape, described as the 'beautiful/ Uncountry of an estuary' (2009: 3) is fully present and often embodied in the poem, from marsh grass that 'prickles its hackles' (2009: 29), to the dangerous mud that is '[p]ure mouth it has such lip muscles' (2009: 30). Through the interactions of moon, river and people, the poem builds towards the moment of the Severn bore. This is a tidal surge, formed by the narrowing of the river's channel, which draws large crowds each equinox (when the wave's height is at its greatest). The poem describes the crowds lining the bank, who:

stand on the bank, zipped up, staring through cameras  
or pressed to pub windows, or under the willows in the rain,



running through fields in wetsuits, whooping,  
wanting to ride the very rim of the river-wheel (2009: 32)

Despite the specifics of voice and story, the poem's population strives to reflect all who experience the river, both locals and visitors. Due to the poem's purpose (as part of the 2009 Severn Project) this inclusivity must have been a compositional consideration, as it is in my own work. Thus Oswald's poem interweaves human and the non-human, the specific story and the general crowd, without privileging one over the other.

Oswald's 2002 poem, *Dart*, is similarly sourced from interviews and landscape interaction. Oswald spent two years walking the river and recording conversations with the people that she encountered (2002: preface, n.p.) and their words are used to build the river's narrative.

Unlike *A Sleepwalk on the Severn*, *Dart* has particular contextual significance due to the intermingling of the river's natural and industrial aspects; Cornwall's landscape, now quietly post-industrial, once reverberated with the sounds and vocabulary of work so ably captured here. For instance, when the river passes the woollen mill, the poem's right-justified lines of information inform the reader that the mill 'has a licence to extract river water for washing the wool and for making up the dyes'. The river/speaker immediately transmits the associated terminology in a spill of language that mimics rushing water:

tufting, felting, hanks tops spindles slubbings  
hoppers and rollers and slatted belts  
bales of carded wool the colour of limestone (2002: 19)

Subsequent industry-based users along the river's course include the tin extractor, setting up his own alluvial plant on the banks of his fields (2009: 17), the sewage worker, who outlines his relationship with the 'smelly water' (2009: 30), and the water abstractor, who keeps the drinking water safe: 'This is what keeps you and me alive, this is the real work of the river' (2009: 25). Here, the water abstractor's line 'You don't know what goes into water' (2009: 25) not only cues another tumble of technical terms but is suggestive of the whole poem's polyvocality.

As in *A Sleepwalk on the Severn*, Oswald uses a preface to define how the poem's voice functions: 'There are indications in the margin where one voice changes into another. These do not refer to real people or even fixed actions. All voices should be read as the river's mutterings' (2002: n.p.). The poem's final lines reaffirm this:

who's that moving into the dark? Me.

This is me, anonymous, water's soliloquy,

all names, all voices, Slip-Shape this is

Proteus,

whoever that is, the shepherd of the seals,

driving my many selves from cave to cave (2002: 48)

Using the 'anonymous' water as a medium for lyric mutability opens the poem to multiple readings. For example, Deryn Rees-Jones finds evidence of a struggle, suggesting that 'Oswald's role of overseer of the poem seems to be an attempt to find a voice—for herself and for nature' (2005:236). In contrast, Charles Armstrong locates a more pacific

polyvocality, structured by the shifts in form from short-sentence lyric pieces to prose-like monologues (2009, 193). Following Armstrong, I would argue that the form of 'A Sleepwalk on the Severn' is constructed to allow the 'many selves' of the poem to surface, as briefly evident individuals, much as wave-tips break on a surging river.

Justin Hopper's work also takes stories of water as inspiration. The audio sequence, *Public Record: Estuary* (Hopper, 2013) begins in archival sources detailing the sea disasters on the Thames Estuary in Essex. These poems, like those of Oswald, evoke the presence of a living water, here inhabiting a landscape of salt marshes and mudflats. The poems incorporate direct quotations from the sources alongside local narratives through poetic interpretation, accentuated by the voices of different persons reading on the recording.<sup>11</sup> *Public Record: Estuary* was commissioned by Metal Arts and debuted at the 2013 Shorelines literary festival. It is available as a walking tour or can be streamed online for free, which, by returning the work to the community that originated it, mediates its unavailability as a printed document.<sup>12</sup>

The first poem, 'High Water Mark', opens with a line that unites the structure and theme of the piece. 'We read in lore of the foreshore and the sea bed' (1: 31) evokes the communality of the listeners (the humans who work with, and against, the sea), foreshadows the many speakers-to-come, and suggests the 'reading' of an archive that is

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<sup>11</sup> In a mode reminiscent of Susan Howe's concern over archival facts, Hopper outlines his apologia on a page on his website, writing '*Public Record: Estuary* is based on true events, but it is not meant to express factual information [and is written] less from a historical perspective than from a poetic one' (2013c: n.p.) [italics mine].

<sup>12</sup> Thus Hopper's work can be experienced beyond the moment of performance, which is also the desired outcome from my own publications through ChickenBeak Books. However, as I was also responding to requests to be able to *read* the poetry it was important that I produced a printed source rather than record a reading (although I acknowledge that Oswald's *A Sleepwalk on the Severn* found success in both media).

not only a gathering of printed sources but also that which is 'written' into the landscape though the estuary's seasonal cycles.<sup>13</sup>

As well as a firm sense of the marine history of Leigh-on-Sea, listeners to *Public Record: Estuary* are offered more diverse uses of water from the archive; yet focus remains on the tension between the water's ability to both give life and to take it away. This is made clear when such a moment as 'The immersion of Baptists at Leigh: on Sunday, Pastor G. Jones of the Leigh Baptist church baptised three candidates in the sea' ('High Water Mark', 6: 38) moves immediately into 'the wild red deer can never again come down to drink at the Thames in the dusk of the evening' (7: 04). These inclusions contrast baptism, where water bestows a symbolic new life, to the loss of natural life when access to water is prevented. Furthermore, each of these moments is framed in the wider narrative of death at sea. The water, it is suggested, is as capricious as it is essential.

Hopper provides synopses of his historical sources on a separate web page (2013c). Although not reproduced from the archive, this allows the poet to include the 'hearsay' so important in the compositional framework of Catherine Bowman (see below). For example, 'Two nine-year-old boys [...] Cotgrove and Noakes – rescue a drowning girl named Florry Rand from the creek. Some fishermen superstitiously avoided learning to swim, feeling that is worse to anger the ocean by cheating its wrath' (2013c: n.p.). Hopper's explication of his own archive-of-relation serves a dual purpose. It not only fulfils the lyric urge (demonstrated by Howe and Bowman) to show the poet at work in the archive, but also provides the

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<sup>13</sup> All extracts are my own transcription from the Soundcloud audio files, giving the time locations as (minutes: seconds). As I have only experienced this poetry as an audio work I have not used line breaks in any of the quotations that follow.

production notes of a confident poet whose selections were contained enough to allow such a list without the fear of narrative confusion or a dilution of the poetry's artistic force.

The latter half of the final poem, 'A Half Marine Place' (from 6: 40) is read in Justin Hopper's own clear North-American accent, which brings its own presence and poetic force. Claiming to introduce 'Further sea words, or rather river words' (7: 27), the poem in fact drifts from water to note the changes of the season on the estuary at Leigh. In this poem, the source text, C. J. Cornish's *The Naturalist on the Thames* (1902), grants the poet eyes and a voice with which to report such moments as the finding of 'a place fringed with wild rose and wild plum' (7: 30). Here the poet and the earlier writer seem to be inhabiting one mind, where the dated register promotes the sense of the contemporary reclaiming words of the past, where the lyric 'I' becomes a contested site. At this poem's close, the double-voiced speaker leaves the edge of the water to muse: 'I found my mind exercised with a peculiar fascination: the reclamation of land from the waves' (7: 42). The listeners, therefore, are not only offered a metaphor for the 'reclaimed' text but are returned to the theme of the human struggle with an estuary, which is sometimes land, sometimes water, and always dangerous.

Listening to this work reinforces the difference in reception that real-time, voiced delivery provides. This piece is striking in its verbal liquescence, and the frustration of not being able to find the copies to read made me attend all the closer, and to enjoy those moments when I lose what is being said but am still carried by the poem's sense and the connections of sound. Hopper describes his practice as work which 'ties to specific locations to haunt them with myth' (Hopper 2013b, n.p.), but I would argue that the archive, rather than myth, provides the driving vigour of this piece. The stories that the poet accessed are not universal or generic tales; they are specific, and recorded not only in the local record

office but in the local consciousness. Once again, poetry is the archive's perfect advocate, spatially, temporally and, by giving the same consideration to each element, democratically.

Susan Howe's 1999 book, *Pierce-Arrow*, collects three long poem-sequences, which were the result of Howe's interrogation into the archive of logician Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914). This collection not only responds to the 100,000 pages of micro-reproductions of the original manuscripts held at the Harvard University's Houghton Library, but also to secondary criticism of Peirce's academic output.

*Pierce-Arrow* provides a valuable guide for the transmutation of archival fact into poetry, as it oscillates, as critic Susanne Rohr suggests, 'between the poles of poetic and academic discourse [...] a kind of 'poetic historiography'' (2008: 47). Howe's concern over the treatment of fact is obvious; indeed, in a 1996 essay on nonfiction film she names poetry 'factual telepathy' (1996: 297). Her poetry is created around the extant, working around materials tangible and externally verifiable, and transmits these 'facts', mind to mind. *Pierce-Arrow* shows apprehension at what is lost, or changed, when poetry is the means of this transference:

I can spread historical information, words and words we can never touch hovering  
around a subconscious life where enunciation is born, in distinction from what it  
enunciates when nothing rests in air when what is knowledge?

A person throws a stone

as fact through air not

fact but appearance of

fact floating in vacuua (1999: 6)

For Howe, therefore, facts can be thrown. They have weight and trajectory. But Howe immediately undermines this position with ‘not fact but appearance of’ – which is a reminder, or a warning, that the fact of the archive may not be factual outside it. Therefore, as Elisabeth Joyce suggests, despite Howe’s exertions to present a history based on fact, her poetry can only ‘pose suspect elements leading further away from the truth, and from the identity that could be created by that truth’ (Joyce, 2010: 33). It is a strong reminder that the archive is an ideological practice founded on subjectivity: it cannot lie, but need not contain the truth. This is particularly pertinent when examining the letters of Boulton and Watt, whose awareness of the letters as record is revealed by the presence of – obviously disobeyed – instructions to destroy the letter once read. For example, in a letter detailing confidential plans around changes in the copper industry, James Watt entreats, ‘Burn this letter that I may not be brought into any scrape’, which is reinforced beneath the signature with ‘I beg you will destroy this letter’ (AD1583-1-65). Matthew Boulton ends a letter about payments from smaller Cornish engines with ‘Burn this piece’ (AD1583/1/47). These appeals to alter the record not only suggest that Boulton and Watt were aware of the afterlife of their written words but also raises the question of what other letters might have existed but were subsequently destroyed.

Howe collects facts that lead beyond the archive in *Pierce-Arrow’s* opening section, ‘Arisbe’, named after the house Peirce shared with his wife. These essay-like pages, where Howe first describes herself at work, recount the difficult conditions in the Harvard basement. Thus Howe’s labour matches that of Peirce, whose dedication to his work is evident in the sheer mass of archive material. She re-writes his history, allowing her own asides and connections to build her Derridean associative archive. Following Derrida’s claim that ‘There is no meta-archive’ (1997: 67), Howe’s interpretation of the archive results in

the new work being inscribed inside it, inviting new poetic directions for the next two sections of the book. Thus Arisbe leads to Homer, to Pope's translation, good paper for the manuscript, Emily Dickinson—all of which wait in this first section to be taken up in the next. These indications of intent, Howe suggests, serve as a contents page or programme of study:

I will print you a syllabus  
Continuity probability even  
the predictability of drift. (1999: 22)

Thus the subsequent poem sequences that complete *Pierce-Arrow*, 'Leisure of the Theory Class' and 'Rückenfigur', are free to concatenate Peirce's archive, the themes of his work, other writers and the value of myth, with a freedom predicated upon this poetics of drift.

Whereas Howe follows a sequence of moves away from the content of the material archive, the poetry in *The Plath Cabinet* by Catherine Bowman (2009) keeps one hand on her source, the Sylvia Plath Archive held at the University of Indiana. Bowman makes full use of the archive, both material and conceptual, for her 'inkling, riffs and big-picture imaginings' (2009: 69) of the wider archive of popular Plath mythology. Thus Bowman might base some of her work upon 'hearsay and real-life events.' (2009: 69), but always remains centred upon Plath as subject.

Like Howe, Bowman informs the reader of her time and effort with the archive, stating that she spent 'many a pleasurable and snowy afternoon with the Plath materials, looking at the drafts, letters, photographs and memorabilia' (2009:69). The poetry inspired by these investigations responds to 'the textures revealed by the archive, the life revealed by and



embodied by these objects' (2009: 69). In considering material evidence of Plath's life (such as her passport, her paper dolls or a braided lock of her hair), Bowman offers (as outlined in her own words) 'another way to go back to Plath as well as to go forward' (2009: 69). This point reinforces the perceived stability of archive material, and suggests why poets are drawn to use it, for the 'archived' past and the ephemeral present may co-exist in a poem.

In the chapter of this exegesis describing my creative practice, I argue that 'game-playing' is an essential introductory stage for a poet working with an archive. Not only does this offer a strategy of resistance to being emotionally or artistically overwhelmed but invites its own discoveries through the scissors and glue or the algorithmic patterning of words. Bowman uses this technique to collect and reframe Plath's thoughts, distilling her moods into moments. For example 'Diary Starts, 1943' re-arranges opening lines of Plath's diary:

Dear sweet diary, Today is the day of my

Oh hum drum diary. Some old deep dark

Little diary, Mother has bought me

Dear, diary, How I waste (2009:36)

This is a poem of brave new beginnings, as though each new entry could offer the eradication of the previous day's dissatisfaction—and yet (although the lines are cut from whole sentences) the progression of the opening words—Dear, Oh, Little, Dear—simultaneously gives the sense of a halting, unhappy speaker, catching themselves on the edge of confession. The choice of where to cut also changes sense to underscore the poem's quiet desperation: for example, 'How I waste' is exquisitely expressive in its truncations as the verb 'waste' shifts back to 'I' as the subject, reinforced by the progressive shortening of

the line lengths. Thus Bowman's careful arrangement of these incomplete lines and shifting terms of affection in direct address conspire to create a sense of Plath's creeping depression and urge towards self-destruction.

Directly imported archive material also frames 'Things to Eat, Paris, 1953' (2009: 61). This poem opens with a list of foods: 'White beans, brandy, escargot, cake...' which fill the first seven lines of the poem. Plath, the writer, is brought in on line eight: 'She took a borrowed Olivetti to Paris'. Until this point the identity of the archive itself has dominated the reading of the poem, where the collated details resonate with questions of origin and authenticity. The reader is invited to imagine the sources, whether letters, diaries or menus, and the poem slips into a mode of historiography, reading (and presenting) a collation of curios. However, this is soon undermined: Bowman relocates the mood of the poem, and bestows upon the speaker knowledge of Plath's life, writing: 'Soon she would meet / Ted Hughes and bite him until he bled' (2009: 61).

As well as the materials held at the university's Lilley Library, Bowman makes strong use of the wider Plath archive, the 'hearsay and real-life events' of Plath's life. The short poem 'Sylvia's Stove' may not find its beginnings in the archive proper (for generational material is not listed in the closing notes) but this domestic drama, which relates the problematic installation of a stove by 'the gas boys' (2009: 10) makes a proleptic gesture towards Plath's suicide. This use of dramatic irony is activated through the wider archive of common knowledge, where assumptions about what the reader knows are important compositional considerations. Thus the poet's treatment of sources from archives, material and immaterial, parallels my own work among the different knowings of the Cornish landscape.

In her use of the Plath myth, Bowman appropriates both life and death, but does not allow this to happen unchallenged. The poetry critiques itself in terms of exploitation, for

example 'Sylvia's Snakecharmer', which directly addresses Plath and tells her how her personal effects (and nothing could be more personal than hair, produced from the 'person') are included in the archive's democratic access:

They keep your hair here under lock and key  
at the rare books library. Poets and scholars arrive in town  
giggle nervously and say oh how very creepy  
  
but still ask to see your braid, and when no one  
is looking touch it.

(2009: 24)

Bowman, one of the visiting poets, does not excuse herself here, but instead offers a moment of her speaker's life as balance: 'You manufacture a man that is all snake/ I grew up in the desert with snake men too' (2009: 24). This moment of lyric intrusion is a relief, with its sense of women trading stories as they establish their friendship and earn each other's trust.

This darker side of archival work is also taken up in 'The Martyrdom of Sylvia Plath', where the celebration of a violent death corresponds with the saint legends of Christianity. The body of the poet suffers a number of deaths as the poem progresses: 'The heart and guts hang hooked' becomes 'She stands burning', which moves to 'Flayed' and the 'amorous arrows twined /to her hard limbs' (2009: 57). In referencing the mythos of such figures as Joan of Arc and St Bartholomew, Bowman's cruelties to Plath here are excused by

the aura of martyrdom, a 'saving' that is not, in fact, religious but cultural, as the archivists 'save' Plath's possessions.

Joshua Poteat's 2009 *Illustrating the Machine that Makes the World* also deals with death, but, unlike the suicide of Plath in *The Plath Cabinet*, frames the event as a beginning rather than as an ending. This collection pairs poems with examples from the archive of the engravings of J. G. Heck, the nineteenth-century German illustrator. Throughout the poetry, Poteat mixes his own life with the imagined life of the illustrator to evoke the natural world, its movement towards death, and the question of what lies beyond life.

Due to the nature of the source material, there are no poems which engage with the surrounding materialities of archive investigation, and the provision of Heck's images as an appendix is a further removal from the poetics of archive use I have identified above. However, the source images are integral to this creative work. Heck's detailed engravings are deliberate, perfect, and often unintelligible without their explanatory titles. In an inverse relationship to the strict archival function (which holds documents that have been created 'naturally' by the process of transactions) these pictures have been created to help understand an aspect of the natural world, found in the movement of Mercury across the sun or the connection of bone in a pair of skeletal hands. Although the word 'archive' is used on the front page of both the source text and the poetry collection, Poteat's relation to the archive, conceptual and material, is less obvious in these poems, which frees their reading from any anxiety of authority or faithfulness to the source.

Poteat's most obvious extractions from the archive are textual. He employs the pictures' titles as the titles for his poems. However, he breaks from the archive's strict structuring to create his own titles: 'Illustrating an Answer to a Question Through the Order in Which a Bird Reveals Letters by Eating the Grains Set on Top of Them' is noted as 'plate unknown'. This

poet's license (and playfulness) that brings about such creation-through-evasion is suggestive of Poteat's *mutatis mutandis* archival strategy, one perhaps given force by the lack of contact with the material realities of an archival institution.

The inclusion of this collection in my archive provides two useful departures from the poets considered above. First, Poteat is working with a collection of images rather than a primarily textual or linguistic base, and second, his practice, when read alongside Derrida's *Archive Fever*, provides examples of the archive's *mal d'archive*, the drive to destroy, in the sequence of erasure poems. In this example, the engraving that shares the poem's title, 'Illustrating the Theory of Ebb and Flow' shows The Sun, The Moon and Earth in a diagram of positions that result in full, half or crescent moons. This balancing of ebb and flow can be found in the unerased poem, where the natural world, in speaking of itself, gives solace to the troubled, reasoning mind.

## Illustrating the Theory of Ebb and Flow

[PLATE 6, FIG.23]

When I have had enough of reason,

I turn to the evening boughs

among the wild fern,

steam on the horse's back,

the tidy white guts of ants spread

across the floors, and field after field

of fireflies saying, *I'm here,*

*make love to me, I'm here.*

Every bit of it simple, entire, intact,

maybe even ordinary.

All the essential lonelinesses

giving account of themselves.

However, in the erased version (now called ‘the ebb’), this has become violent, even desolate:<sup>14</sup>

the ebb  
  
I had enough of  
the evening  
the wild  
horse’s  
guts spread  
across the field  
saying, *here,*  
*love* , *here.*

The preservation of the lineation, including the hanging comma, is important to the sense of space in the poem, with a slowing down of thought as the eyes travel between the words. This presentational convention, found in such seminal erasure works as *RADI OS* by Ronald Johnson, is not detailed in Bernstein’s 1996 definition of erasure (71), and thus remains a

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<sup>14</sup> For a comprehensive history of the purpose and techniques of erasure poetics, see Macdonald (2009).

choice of form that can respond to each poem's individual needs. This process of archival self-erasure provides valuable contrast to my own, differently designed, process of material refinement (based upon mineral processing) in which I do not preserve the spaces. This will be discussed in more detail in the section on composition.

Much of Peter Riley's 2004 collection, *Excavations*, can also be read in terms of archival poetics. *Excavations*, which collects work beginning in 1995, is a series of prose-poem meditations upon nineteenth-century reports of burial mound archaeological digs. Riley's use of extant material in this work is ostensibly laid out in his preface, under the title 'Technicalities':

*Italics: about 90% represent quotation from the archaeology sources, usually in fragmented and not necessarily exact quotation, but there is a 10% anarchic principle within which they can also be anything else. This proportion is greater with **bold**, which basically represents quotation or feigned quotation from old texts, the majority 16<sup>th</sup> or 17<sup>th</sup> century lyrics in English (2004: 6).*

In categorising the 'unreliable signals' (Rumsey, 2007: n.p.) of '*anarchic principle*', '*basically represents*' and '*feigned*', Riley's preface expands from a simple guide to source material into an invitation to see the poet working, creatively selecting and de-selecting. In an interview collected in a special issue of *The Gig*, Riley states 'I'm no expert on *Excavations*. That's the kind of thing it is' (Tuma, 1999: 27). However, Riley's expertise is found, in part, in this use of technical explanations to both project and protect his compositional method, which is an essential process for a writer working with the words of others.



Furthermore, the poetry of Peter Riley can be examined in relation to both archives and landscape. Riley worked on a writing project concerning lead mining in Derbyshire between 1978 and 1981. Ultimately, he abandoned the main enterprise; however, the poetry was 'rescued' (Riley: 2010: 9) and collected in *Tracks and Mineshafts* (1983). The result is multi-formed and shifting, with, as John Hall suggests, a philosophy which refuses to be 'systematic or academic; the steadily-held "I" of the phenomenologist is cut into the multiple text' (1999: 41). Riley's gestures towards the landscape and the people who worked it are sometimes explicit, other times obscure, and yet always strive towards comprehensibility in terms of the politics of land use: 'We mould the materials of earth to our own rhythms/ ignoring the backlash' (2010: 63).

The mechanical and systematic repetitions of mining (which often influenced both form and content of my poetry) have not passed unnoticed by Riley:

The landscape is fed back to its source  
at our fingertips; the one thing being made  
is hoisted up the shaft towards home,  
redoubling the truth of what's there,  
by what's surely somewhere.

(Riley, 2010: 51)

In this poem, 'the one thing' made from the mining efforts is the ability to make *many* things, the productive value of industry that affects people and alters place.

The presence of valuable minerals under the landscape reverberates in the speaker's awareness, as much as it does in the poet's. In a note to his later poem, *Alstonefield* (2003),

Riley writes that walking in a lead mining landscape produces ‘the sense of a palace under your feet shining with Galena (crystallised lead ore)’ (2003: 103). In *Tracks and Mineshafts* the poem ‘Glutton’ illustrates the miner inside this palace, at the moment of thrill and the relief of striking a lode: ‘Set around the guard mechanisms, channelled, under command, the miner’s eye catches a lustre, a hidden spark in the tensed rock’ (2010: 39). The adjective choices ‘hidden’ and ‘tensed’ intimate towards a personified agency that can be read as an unwillingness to be extracted, as a landscape resistant to the human intervention. This is in part balanced by a moment in ‘And the Miners’, where Riley links the mining enterprise, and its subsequent community formation, to the communal experience of life, the body’s heart thumping inside the chest:

For in spite of everything we are together,  
every single one of us, dead and alive  
and something won’t let us forget it, this  
endless hammering inside matter. (2010: 90)

However, concentration upon the positive human aspects of mining is not maintained. ‘In spite of everything’ speaks to the loss of both industry and landscape. This thought is taken further in Riley’s essay on *Tracks and Mineshafts*, where he writes ‘[t]he mining environment is a world lost for the sake of the world’ (2010: 177).

Thus the sorrow of the Derbyshire post-industrial landscape pervades this collection. It is a ‘land [...] riddled with failed promises/ and premature returns (2010: 58), where ‘abandoned mines/ standing out like sores’ (2010: 27) move towards their inevitable eradication from the landscape: ‘The mines—they all ended/ in a silent lake (2010: 91).

Memories of the industry, language and activity are manifested in the extraction of lead, 'carted off in lorry-loads to front a bank' (2010: 61). The lead 'spread like language throughout the world' but has now fallen silent as the industry ceased; the 'carefully sought detail' now only destined to be 'handed to the archivist' (2010: 61-62). This line leads us back to the origin of my own investigation, which is bolstered by the attitude of cultural value and celebration that now exists around Cornish mining history.

Similar consideration of a lead-mined landscape drives the poems of Andrew Forster's 2010 collection, *Territory*. Indeed, the Peter in 'Galena' (2010: 13) – who 'stops to prise a rock from the earth' to identify the 'smudges of dark black' – could be Riley, the instructing older poet. *Territory* investigates the surrounds of Leadhills, a former mining village in the south west of Scotland, where miner's cottages, heritage-based tourist sites and the physical remnants of the industry all serve Forster's poetry of place.

'Shafts' describes the mystery of structures found on the local hill:

Rough wooden stakes, spaced and strung together  
with barbed wire, bare of any explanation (2010: 12)

Here, too, the description is bare, which serves to underpin the functionality and the perceived mystery of the stakes' presence. However, the mystery is fleeting: both the title and the next stanza provide the 'explanation':

[...] on an old map I count  
Fifty-three mines in a five mile radius  
Underpinning the streets and houses. (2010: 12)

The use of 'underpinning' here (rather than the more obvious 'undermining') gives a sense of securing, rather than destabilising, and, (as the poet has trouble distinguishing between the 'opening of a shaft / or the trick of the light') describes a landscape in which mining remnants are so well integrated that they have become indistinguishable, hidden in view. This is a process alive in the Cornish post-industrial landscape, where the engine houses' practical, mechanical shape has become a paradox-free emblem of rural Cornwall.

'Wanlockhead' (2010: 17) uses a sequence of four quatorzains (the sonnet gesture is obvious, but without the conventional use of metre or volta) to represent the four stops on a tour to a mining heritage site. These poems further investigate the area's blend of domestic and industrial. The first poem, titled 'The Village', describes an uneasy effect of preservation: 'It feels stopped, this place', with a suggestion that temporal blurring between life-now and life-as-it-was delivers mixed meanings that could be valuable:

[...] It's hard to see  
Where the village ends and the museum begins,  
Public cottages found among the private  
Like seams of ore running through rock. (2010: 17)

The further poems ('The Miners' Cottage', 'The Mine', 'The Miner's Library') bring the reader on the tour, sharing the speaker's impression of being 'guided by a trail of stories'

(2010: 17), with 'the voice of the guide like a line paid out' (2010: 18). As the final poem of the sequence describes the museum of the Miners' Library, we see this tour, and thus this sequence of poems, as the library itself. Inside there are stories to be read, but the idea of 'access prevented by a rope barrier' is suggestive of the barriers we have to our understanding of the past.

In 'Wanlockhead' the speaker gains access to local stories of a mining region, but this poem's final lines (which I would argue function as a volta) engage with my concerns about cultural representation and the attendant modes of access to stories of preservation.

There's a wax model of a stern librarian  
and a recorded voice spelling out the rules:  
each book may be borrowed for one week,  
the cost of damage must be reimbursed. (2010: 18)

Through the wax model, Forster presents an image which unites the ideas of history faked for the sake of spectacle, calling to mind the particular tensions between the archive's need for preservation and the heritage industry's need to display. Furthermore, the idea of old, dead rules is a criticism of cultural hierarchies, where the stories of the village are freely told, but no one is allowed to even approach the books of poets in the library, 'Scott and Burns, / of course, Wordsworth, Coleridge' (2010: 18). However, this poem works well to support the suggestion that the heritage preservation, the preserved stories, are just that: 'reordered, partial, tidied up' (Farley and Roberts, 2012: 157).

In 'Into the Hills' (2010: 27) the poet again addresses this concern. The speaker, in walking the landscape, is in the dual state of psychic accessibility, where he imagines a

miner, 'dust into the lines of his face', who wants to 'feel his limbs stretch /and breathe the sweet damp air', but is also self-aware:

Here I find my own rhythm  
in a landscape with a host of stories  
in which I hope to play my part. (2010:28)

This poem describes the 'stretching out' of sensibility to the landscape in preparation for the act of poetic composition, which, it is suggested, requires the dropping away of 'passing cars and everyday noise' that 'weighs down' the mind. In this quiet, the speaker can 'see' (a stronger verb than 'imagine') men who had walked there before as they pursued their roles of gamekeeper or miner. This poem's underlying anxiety resonates with the poetic report of archive work in the work of Howe and Bowman, functioning as a way to 'show the working', seeking the right to write. In some small way, this is carried through the assonance that moves between 'own—host—hope', in which a push for permission, as well the more obvious inclusion, can be detected. Like me, Forster is not native to the landscape he is working with, and the need to express the viewpoint of a stranger could give the motivation for this piece.

This archive of poetry is further enriched by the inclusion of Leanne O'Sullivan's 2013 collection, *The Mining Road*. Inside are poems inspired by the remains of the copper industry on the landscape of her home in West Cork, Ireland, where the legacy of mining is explored 'as a symbol of the depth within local, private lives' (Matthews, 2013: n.p.). O'Sullivan describes the collection's theme as 'digging down, with effort. It's about the landscape, and it's also about cultural memory and trying to see things in a new light'

(2013b: n.p.). The moments of these poems, therefore, are particularly germane to the aspect of my enquiry concerned with the local, and sometimes private, experience of the Cornish landscape.

The title poem, 'The Mining Road' (O'Sullivan, 2013: 18) uses the landscape as a historical frame for the interwoven dreams of three generations of women. The opening lines, 'Where moss is gold in the copper pools / my mother dreams her mother on the road', introduce the temporal layering of this piece, for the mining pools, now dry enough for moss to grow, are the only sites left where gold is exchanged for copper. The poem unites the history of Ireland and the mines through the symbolic unravelling and re-creation of the grandmother's cardigan: 'Famine road, mine road, moss stitch; / like grass swallowed down a shaft / the wool quivers up again towards her lap.' Thus the female industry of knitting brings together the structural binding of generations with the idea of mortality, with the grandmother's 'wound stitched / and shivering beneath her night-clothes'. Furthermore, the unravelling of an existing garment to make a new one prompts thoughts of personal histories being retold in an attempt to overcome the official narrative, stitched by historians and, as a consequence, being the only story told in and to the wider society. A similar reading has been applied to 'Safe House', another of O'Sullivan's poems in this collection, by Tina O'Toole, who argues that:

[t]he poem cannot but remind the contemporary reader of those other submerged histories and absentees—migrants, institutionalized children, Magdalene women, refugees and asylum seekers—whose occlusion continues to be necessary for the "story of the nation" to be produced as a seamless progress narrative. (Bryan et al, 2013:85)

'The Mining Road' closes with focus upon the road as a carrier of memory:

I dream them now together in the mountain light  
leading each other where the road winds down,  
and carries on, past where they thought it would end. (2010: 18).

This suggests that, although the end of life must come (just as a road 'winds down'), the ability to dream (personal, historical, cultural) can give the 'dead' another path. Dreaming here could also mean the writing of poetry. This echoes my own work with the Portreath to Devoran mineral tramway, another 'mining road' that refused to end, and has now been reclaimed for leisure use. There are further parallels in this poem's familial relationship with the landscape: except for the description of 'mountain light' this could be a poem of Cornwall and the women of Cornwall.

In an approximation of the archival need to gather, O'Sullivan's poems that deal directly with the mined landscape are gathered in a section called 'Store'. In the first poem, 'Storehouse', the speaker's mind works to reopen the closed mine, prompted by the sight of the ruins on the landscape. This is a short, effective poem, which I will include in full:



Where two pillars remember a way in  
we will have to imagine it again,  
  
dream the rusting bolt and door,  
The evening stars breaking the ore;  
  
to hear the work beneath the ground,  
and mine the lower, darker sounds –  
  
the heaving and hush, load by load,  
and the bellowing roar of the wagon road. (2013: 37)

The poet's use of rhyming couplets not only refers directly to traditional forms of Irish and Anglo-Irish writing, but provides a clear metrical push suggestive of the processes of mining—the steady progression of the shafts, the engine's steady thumping as pumps drive water from the shafts. Much of the poem's melancholy comes in the first couplet, where the 'have to'—which could easily have read 'we will imagine it again' (and still fit the metrical structure) makes the thought both imperative and plaintive: it is a forced reaction (perhaps even an unwelcome one, with its 'darker sounds') triggered by seeing the storehouse ruins, and yet also serves to remind us that imagination is the only remaining entry point to the industry. Acknowledging this suggests that the speaker's mind is the true 'storehouse' of the title.

The final poem from this collection I wish to examine as context for my own work is 'Sea Level' (O'Sullivan, 2013: 41). This poem worries at mine shafts that extend out beneath the sea bed, and opens with an admirable forthrightness. The speaker uses no imagery to describe the tunnels below. This is the voice of one who, although not a miner themselves, knew of their candlelit endeavours:

We always knew  
they were mining  
below the sea (2013:41)

Through the recall of the mining sound of 'inconsolable hammering', the speaker shifts time to become part of the past mineral processes. They enter the sea to 'wade/ in the grey water'. That the speaker must 'wade' foregrounds intent, with its muscular push through water much higher than the ankle. It is their employment, to 'haul clouds of shingle and ore / along their dressing floors.' Thus the poem brings together the memories of the industry, the re-emergence of mining gathering processes through poetry inspired by contemporary landscape interaction, and also manages to control the temporal shift required to bring together these different narratives by never specifically locating the poem in time. This is something I have tried in my own work, similarly providing contrasting details, such as candlelight and iPhones, in the same piece.

I now close this contextual review and turn to methodology, where I will discuss the interview process, examine the use of poetry as a methodology in itself, and critique my own position in the work in terms of both (unavoidable) positionality and the artistic construct of Listener and Speaker Poet.

## METHODOLOGY

This project uses creative work to bring together material sourced from two separate sites.

The first source is the archive material known as the Wilson Papers. These papers comprise the Cornish branch of the Boulton and Watt archive. They detail the business transactions of the Boulton and Watt Mining Company from 1780–1803, and contain the particulars of the private lives (and deaths) of those writing and their families.

This primary historical source has over a thousand pieces comprising letters and other documents from Boulton and Watt, their family members and others involved in the business. I completed the initial reading of the letters in 2012. However, interactions with the archive continued in a daily fashion, with the use of the transcripts, my own notes and trips to the Cornwall Record Office. In approaching this source I thought that my investigation would manifest as straightforwardly historiographical, i.e. the reading of historical texts. However, upon reflection, it has become clear to me that my historical sources were by no means limited to the archive and the books I read about mining technologies and the history of West Cornwall's mining industries. Due to the ubiquitous promotion of mining history in Cornwall, and the magpie mind of the practising poet, I realise now that I had been gathering sources in the manner described by historical geographers Cloke et al, who add 'imaginative sources' to the more standard sources of archives and printed materials (2004: 93). This idea is further explored by Morrissey, who asserts that the 'imaginative use of such sources as literature, travel writing, newspapers, cinema, photography and electronic media are now commonplace in the [historiographical] sub-discipline' (2014: 293).

The second significant source of this work is material gathered through interviews with people in Cornwall. I used interviews to research and record contemporary narratives of the post-industrial landscape. Interviewing is an established social-science method for gathering qualitative data. My initial research into questionnaire design (Warren, 2001) led to the conclusions that many of the formal data gathering methods were not applicable. I was not seeking patterns, or to have a hypothesis verified by data; rather, I was gathering inspiration for poetry, drawn from individual experience of the material landscape and related through thoughts, words, and impressions. Thus the interview type I employed was the qualitative (unstructured) interview.

Qualitative interviewing focuses on 'personal perceptions and personal histories' (Dunn, 2010: 111), where the individual perspective of the respondent is encouraged but with gentle guidance from the researcher. Unstructured interviews 'take place as a scheduled, usually extended conversation between researcher and interviewer', where 'the researcher has a general topic in mind, but many of the specific questions are formulated as the interview proceeds, in response to what the interviewee says' (Rubin and Rubin, 2011: 31). An unstructured interview 'permits the person being interviewed to tell their own stories at their own pace, in their own ways, and within their own time frame' (Morse, 2001: 324). This thesis's design of inclusive participation is an effort to access a cultural reading where 'culture is what one does, not what one has' (Shurmer-Smith, 2002: 225). However, these interviews were initially framed in terms of landscape experience through mining history, because that is how the project was explained to the participant in terms of the link with the Boulton and Watt archive. I agree with Dunn (2010), who asserts that an unstructured interview:

requires as much if not more preparation than its structured counterpart [...] sitting in musty archive rooms or perched in front of dimly lit microfiche machines gaining a solid understanding of past events, people and places related to the interview.

(2010: 111)

Because I was conscious of seeking material for creative work, whilst not ignoring my own presence and sensations, it was important that I was permitted to be *present* in these interviews, able to converse with the subject and follow them outside the immediate perimeters of the topic, for: '[i]n the social interaction of the qualitative interview, the perspectives of the interview and the respondent dance together for the moment but also extend outward in social space and backward and forward in time. Both are gendered, aged and otherwise embodied' (Warren, 2001: 98). However, because of this, my presence does need critical address and I explore this more fully below, and in even greater depth in the section on my positionality.

During the interviews I asked individuals for their experiences of being in the Cornish landscape, both in the familiar interpretation (walking the fields and the tourist trails, experiencing the remains of mining culture explicitly or implicitly) but also making room for landscape-as-sensorium. This latter decision came about some months into the investigation, after some anxiety about the gendering of my investigation. Initially, all of my interviews were held with men, all mining enthusiasts and local historians, who gave me full and detailed interviews but were resistant to telling me their personal experiences. I had become aware that the only female perspective in the poetry was my own, and even that was being moderated by the material I was writing through and my own engineering training. The poetry was in danger of presenting a male/science, female/nature duality that

was undesirable, if expected, for as Rees-Jones writes: 'If science has offered itself as a discourse imbued with an often masculinised authority, nature in many ways has functioned as its feminised opposite' (2005: 217). These readings of my work, therefore, are somewhat unavoidable, and yet it was important that the female voice and female experience of the post-industrial landscape was represented.

Because phenomenology concentrates upon the perceiving body in the landscape, these interviews use the phenomenological perspective in eliciting descriptions rather than explanations (Moran 2008: 14). This allowed me to allay any participant anxiety about having to have engineering experience or mining knowledge to be included in the work. It became part of my method, to explain that anyone with their feet over the Tamar was pre-selected and important. (However, these reassurances did not always have the predicted effect, as recorded in the poem 'Exception', page 225.)

This change in attitude viewed the Cornish landscape as constructed through the quotidian as well as the specialist, which aligns with the 'field of relation' model brought to the archive by the use of Derrida.<sup>15</sup> Interviews that begin with discussions of mining culture soon segue into talk of work, leisure and artistic pursuits, and thoughts of the future of the Cornish landscape. As Wylie suggests: 'studies of landscape informed by phenomenology have begun to find ways in which to shuttle between 'embodied acts of landscaping' and issues of power, memory and identity' (2013: 61). In the attempt to align this work with

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<sup>15</sup> See also Tim Ingold's idea of the 'taskscape' (2000: 189-208). In this model, social constructivism of landscape is circumvented by seeing all of its actors, human and non-human, in a field of relation, described as 'a total movement of becoming'. However, as this model is ahistorical and thus unconcerned with context, it is not appropriate for my work. As Lorimer notes in his critique of the taskscape: 'I want to read 'the field' and I want to sense it too: archived, *in situ* and in-between', in a fusion of 'text, context and embodied practice' (2003: 282). I would suggest that the elements missing in the taskscape are found in the deconstructed archive through the continuous play of difference.

these ideas, it must be acknowledged that the use of a phenomenological attitude is not unproblematic, for it could be argued that ethnography and phenomenology are separate philosophies. However, besides the classic definitions, phenomenology also encompasses data gathered from those who have direct, rather than second-hand, experience of a phenomenon (Patton, 2002: 104), which is an obvious component of any ethnographic enquiry. Furthermore, the use of both strategies represents the interdisciplinary nature of this investigation. As Bronwyn Davies writes, '[i]n troubling the boundaries between bodies and landscapes I also trouble the boundaries between sociology, psychology, environmental studies, literary theory and history' (2000: 14). This also acknowledges the way poets appropriate, as creative writing 'intersects, plaits and merges [...] with other academic domains' (Donnelly, 2013: 128). However, if more formal permission is required, it has been granted by anthropologist Barbara Bender, who asserts that landscape 'has to be an area of study that blows apart the conventional boundaries between the disciplines' (1992: 3).

Phenomenology is also problematic in its form, being abstract in its use of the subject/object relations, and to thus use it to describe a particular landscape (Cornwall) may seem at first a misreading of theory. However, John Wylie, Tim Ingold and Christopher Tilley are strong proponents of this mode of landscape investigation, even as they acknowledge the difficulties. As Wylie suggests:

A series of anxieties continue to cluster around landscape phenomenology. It appears, to some at least, to be at once too intimate and too abstract. Too intimate in that, by focusing on lived encounters from which individualised subjects and landscapes emerge, it neglects, or even neutralises, broader critical questions concerning the cultural, political and economic forces which shape landscapes, and

shape perceptions of landscape also. And too abstract in the sense of being overly preoccupied with philosophical considerations around subjectivity, perception and so on, and thus insufficiently tethered to the historical and material specificities of landscape (2013: 59).

In terms of this project's scope there is a useful reading that allows the 'historical and material specificities' to be supplied, in part, by the concrete archive. The individual experience of the local and the tourist are necessarily viewed against Cornish mining heritage, being the physical as well as the cultural background. The ecologist and philosopher David Abram suggests that the everyday is a constituent of phenomenology's horizons, stating:

The everyday world in which we hunger and make love is hardly the mathematically determined 'object' towards which the sciences direct themselves. [...] The world and I reciprocate one another. The landscape as I directly experience it is hardly a determinate object; it is an ambiguous realm that responds to my emotions and calls forth feeling from me in turn. (Abram, 1996: 32-3)

This 'direct experience' of landscape speaks to my interview techniques and content, and the citing of an emotional bond is important to the generation, and purpose, of this project's poetry, which seeks to use creative writing as a useful contact point between two seemingly irresolvable subject positions, exploring, for example, the tensions of experience and ownership of the Cornish landscape by a local and a tourist.



## Participant selection: The Body over the Tamar

Participant selection for any research requires careful thought. I wanted to make participation as wide as possible, because I was seeking contemporary stories of the post-industrial landscape, and if I limited the interviews to a particular set of people (for example, those with direct experience of mining) I would limit the scope of these inputs. Michael Patton's (2002) work on purposive sampling gave me the frame of criterion sampling, which involves outlining criteria and then sampling from within the group. My criteria, I decided, were living bodies in the Cornish landscape. In a project connecting history (memory) and place, the lived body is the essential go-between, for: '[a]s psycho-physical in status, the lived body puts us in touch with the psychical aspects of remembering and the physical features of place' (Casey, 2000: 190). Thus to further outline a criteria concerned with bodies and landscapes, I turned to phenomenology.

In considering bodily presence and landscape this thesis agrees with Christopher Tilley. The first chapter in *The Materiality of Stone* (2004), 'From body to landscape: a phenomenological perspective', seeks to fill the gap between the philosophical vehicle of perception and the experience of particular landscapes. Here, Tilley uses Merleau-Ponty (amongst others) to outline a phenomenological approach which concentrates upon the experience 'always being experience of something, from a bodily point of view [which] seems to be of most direct relevance for conceptualising the complex lived experiences of place and landscape in past and present' (2004: 2).

Tilley agrees with Merleau-Ponty that the memories of the perceiver are important in understanding why they see what they see. He writes:

The body carries time into the experience of place and landscape. Any moment of lived experience is thus oriented by and towards the past, a fusion of the two. Past and present fold in upon each other. The past influences the present and the present rearticulates that past (2004: 12).

Or, as Merleau-Ponty writes, 'past time is wholly collected up and grasped in the present'. (2002: 80). This bringing of the past into the present is a useful tool when seeking landscape narratives. Rather than recording reports of direct phenomenological perceptions, the interviews provide room for people to recount both previous experiences and immediate ideas.

For my work, I thus needed an extension of the ahistorical, apolitical sensing entity outlined in classic existential phenomenology (Heidegger, 1962 and Merleau-Ponty, 2002). Therefore I identified a phenomenologically-oriented research subset called 'The Body over the Tamar'. As this thesis is focused upon the Cornish post-industrial landscape, the fact that a body is over the River Tamar allows its experiences and perceptions to become archived under the project's provenance.

This Body over the Tamar is a verse form. It is a poetic algorithm. The Body may have been born there, and thus to live beyond the Tamar would be to live in 'exile' (Payton, 1996: 9). Equally, the Body over the Tamar is the visitor: the tourist, the business traveller, the student. This is consistent with the Cornish focus of this project and yet also welcomes the inclusion of testimony from the itinerant perceiver.

I acknowledge the problems inherent in the idea of a body 'over' the Tamar, but after considering 'under', 'before', 'behind', 'West of' and 'thiswards', I believe the problems are shared by any attempt to orient the body in place using this geographical boundary. First, a

perceiver based in Cornwall could see the Body over the Tamar as away, for example in Devon. Second, that the idea of being 'over' the Tamar could, equally, be seen as a perspective taken from England's undisputed territory in the east, thus normalising an Anglocentric perspective that is problematic for the Celtic population.

During my research I came into contact with many views and perspectives on Cornish nationalism and the meaning of Cornwall as nation, county, country, holiday and home. The Body over the Tamar can encompass all these views using Sarah Ahmed's work on queer phenomenology, which she uses to think about the spatiality of gender, race and sexuality. She writes: 'Orientations shape not only how we inhabit space, but how we apprehend this world of shared inhabitance, as well as "who" or "what" we direct our energy and attention toward' (2006: 3). However, the use of 'over' provides much through the idea of bridging. Much as the two magnificent bridges carry cars and trains over the Tamar, the body (after Tilley) carries its own history and sense of time into the landscape.

Thus it can be argued that Cornwall invites its own directionality. Lakoff and Johnson's work on metaphors of orientation suggests that most of the fundamental human concepts are organised by metaphors of spacialisation, and these are determined by the physical and cultural experience of a group (2003: 17–19). They list many examples of where 'up' is good (happy/more/healthy) and 'down' the opposite (2003: 22). The Cornish phrase 'up country' for across the Tamar defies this. A recent work by anthropologist Patrick Laviolette (2012) argues that a particular directionality pervades Cornish spatial linguistic idiosyncrasies (2012: 48) where Cornish idioms (such as 'up-country' to denote England) are part of a wider spatio-linguistic practice that identifies themselves as 'locals' or incomers (2012:39). Surprisingly, Laviolette himself uses 'west of Tamar' in his groupings without comment (44, 48). The use of 'west' in many of the epithets for Cornwall and the Cornish can be read as

part of a pejorative phrase, with the use of South-West in particular identified with ‘a policy of treating Cornwall only as a part of a larger region’ (Edwards, 2005: 135).

The Body over the Tamar, therefore, functions as an ontological metaphor (Lakoff and Johnson, 29), where we impose borders upon the natural world in order to adequately conceptualise meaning. I maintain that the Body over the Tamar can have its stories heard without immediately activating ethno-nationalist responses. This is supported by my discussions about the phrasing with participants, who reassured me that this expression did not cause problems. The Cornish were quick to point out that they *are* over the Tamar from England and this barrier is symbolic of many of the oppositions they define themselves by: ‘We know [England is] there, and we never pretend it’s not’ (male, 50s). This aligns with Mike Crang’s idea of ‘relational identity’ (1988: 61) where what we are *not* is seen as just as important as what we are, which applies to the Cornish nationalist who will argue against any notion of Englishness being applied to them. I close this discussion of the Body over the Tamar with the words of a woman who had moved to Cornwall some years ago but often visited family in Bristol. She said, ‘I *am* over the Tamar though. You can’t miss the moment, that bridge is so high [...] you know you’re back home.’

## Poetic Practice as a Method of Investigation

### Location between socially engaged art practice and the social sciences

*A poet may write more to what one does not yet know; an ethnographer (a least in the classic and positivist sense) writes more to what one already knows. The ethnographer poet and the poet ethnographer must do both.*

(Maynard and Cahnmann-Taylor, 2010: 12).

My work seeks to support the assertion that community-oriented arts projects ‘have the power to address cultural and communal needs in ways and to a depth that few other approaches can claim’ (Stephenson, 2007: 83). I argue that poetry, in particular, is the art form best suited to represent narratives from different perspectives, cultural, political and temporal, through its ability to juxtapose and integrate images and ideas. This is not simply a by-product of paratactic or hypotactic syntax, where a progression of images can resist classifying narrative vehicles or conventional grammatical structure; it is also a function of poetry’s compression, which allows for wider individual meaning (and thus, in this case, related cultural resonance) to be taken from the poem by each reader.

For this mode of enquiry, it was necessary for ‘Poetry and the Archive’ to operate across two traditions of research. The first concerns the act of creative writing, where the generation of poetry from the Boulton and Watt archive and interview material seeks to build a body of work that references and reflects the communities who create Cornwall’s contemporary landscape. This work has been made public through two site-specific

performances, offered in exhibition, open-mic readings and academic conferences, and finally distributed in print. The act of making the poems in such a context offers lessons and attendant poetic strategies for similar projects. The public airing of the poems themselves, however, form the second strand of enquiry. Consideration of feedback from events and publications suggests that poetry written from sources in this way can promote a sense of critical understanding of the landscape's historical and contemporary narratives. This is more fully presented in the concluding chapter of this thesis.

Although this investigation's framework and research question does gesture towards the sociological, it is more a piece of sustained creative engagement with archive and place, challenging the perception that such arts-based projects are not resolute in their creative focus and are therefore 'sociology by other means' (McGonagle, 2007: 426). The gap between conventional social science research data and my own data gathering is therefore not in the methods of capture but rather in the attitude formed around these practices. However, this should not suggest that my interviews were not as thorough, as ethical or as valid as those of an ethnographer. The concept of the Listener Poet, outlined fully in a later section of this exegesis, is an artistic analogue (rather than a self-conscious imitation) of the trained social scientist, made without seeking to overturn or demote the status of such research.

This position disagrees with Jeannette Winterson, whose bold claim, 'it is the poet who goes further than any human scientist' (1995: 115), sets the poet and scientist in conflict. Carl Leggo (2008) tempers and corrects the implied privileging of the poet by Winterson when he states—more usefully for this project—that 'the poet is a human scientist' (165), because 'poetry creates textual spaces that invite and create ways of knowing' (167). Furthermore, as Graham Harper points out, it is not just the textual outputs

but the investigations themselves that add to knowledge, for 'creative writing combines human knowledge and human emotion, feeling as well as understanding, so it creates investigative bridges that many research methodologies cannot hope to create' (2013: 287). This idea of bridge-building is further taken up by Susan Finley, who argues that this is a mainstay of any arts-based enquiry, which:

creates and inhabits contested, liminal spaces. It takes the form of the hyphen between art and social-science research. It creates a place where epistemological standpoints of artists and social science workers collide, coalesce, and restructure to originate something new and unique among research practices (Finley, 2008: 72).

By arguing for the coalescence of art and social-science practice, Finley provides an apt description of 'Poetry and the Archive', where methodological innovation and inventive poetic strategies are the conceptual instruments formulated with as much care as any model of sociological analysis.

It should be noted here that the examination of reference between poetry and science is a tradition that began in the Early Modern period. Philip Sidney's *Defence of Poesy* (published 1595) strives to define how subjects such as history and philosophy can, alongside art, claim to be makers of knowledge. In his work, Sidney points out that these sciences, with their focus on the 'principle object', produce facts. One could argue that, like the poet, the social scientist is also not in the business of facts. Qualitative data relies upon perspective. However, as a useful distinction between the aims of the scientific mode of enquiry over the aims of a creative enquiry, the idea of a 'fact' (rather than 'truth')

provides a useful point of reference. As Spiller (2004) outlines, poetry contrasts with science, for it:

is for Sidney an art that does not attempt simply to reflect nature. By creating 'Golden Worlds' which exceed nature, poetry produces virtuous knowledge in its readers precisely because of its artificiality [and] these produce knowledge through 'what may be and what should be'. (2004: 28)

This supports the ideas behind my poetics of narrative resonance, (a composition strategy outlined fully in the section on practice), where a new 'truth', in the form of the poem's story, could be described as 'exceeding the natural' in its attempt to prompt a critical response to landscape in its reader. Each piece is a 'what may be' and the 'what should be' is left mutable, depending upon the reader's own position on the personal and political subjects of the work. Nevertheless, there is a recent turn in the social sciences towards poetry as a way to 'report' the findings of research, which I will examine now.

### The Use of Poetry in Fields other than Arts Practice

Researchers from such disciplines as social science and cultural geography are exploring poetry as a means to present their findings in ways that allow for more associative and cross-cultural readings. As tracked in the work of Lorri Neilsen Glen (2004; 2008; 2013), poetry is being increasingly employed as both a method of enquiry and as a way of representing data collected by qualitative interviews (Eshun and Madge, 2012; Lahman et al, 2010). These researchers endorse poetry for its ability to represent multiple voices



(Mackenzie, 2008) and its flexibility in representing an emotional position (Weibe, 2008). A poet might not deem poetry's capacity to reconfigure meaning or affect geographical understanding as something 'radical' (Eshun and Madge, 2012: 1411), but in the context of social science this is invigorating, particularly for researchers striking out for new methods of representation after the cultural and affective turn in the humanities.<sup>16</sup> Poetry, therefore, becomes a method suggested to facilitate the 'creative synthesis' required to bring out the more evocative aspects of qualitative enquiry (Patton, 2002: 548). Similarly, in their work on constructing geographical knowledge, Mansvelt and Berg cite poetry as one of many forms of geographic representations that should be encouraged in their discipline of human geography (2010: 345). Poetry, it would seem, is breaking free from the schools of English and art to spread throughout the academy.

An example of this experimentation is found in the 2010 paper by Kent Maynard and Melisa Cahnmann-Taylor, both of whom are ethnographers and practising poets. They argue that poetry provides a solution to the primary problem of ethnographical research, where sceptics are uneasy about the truthfulness of the reports and wary about literary techniques facilitating subtle manipulations (2010: 3). Their work draws attention to the 'cultural borderlands between poetry and [critical, experimental] prose, as well as between scholarship and art' (2010: 4). In exploring these borderlands, they argue that instability of meaning possible in poetic representation does not undermine their ethnographic training,

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<sup>16</sup> Although a counterargument, that the affective turn limits the use of poetic representation, is also possible. Due to affect often being collected or described in metaphor, this would ask for poetry that was ultimately representing a representation, and thus further diluted in any claim, however hesitantly, towards a recognisable truth. This systematic layering of metaphor and poetic construct is the reason I chose not to overtly employ any non-representational theory (NRT) in my enquiry, despite its increasing popularity in current cultural-based arts research.

qualification and validity; indeed, they champion its allusiveness, indirection and ability to resonate with emotional experience (2010: 6). In an effort to spread the adoption of poetry as a tool for anthropologists, they include a list of further reading: not only poetry titles for the reader to buy but also a second appendix of 'Ten Great Poetry Manuals to Teach Anthropologists about Poetic Craft' (2010: 19). These how-to guides and introductions are offered as a bridge between two separate ways of making knowledge which, as has been previously noted in the discussion on Sidney, were once considered to be much closer. This bridge, once (re)discovered, can serve as a route to innovative methodologies, and, as such, parallels my own reading on qualitative enquiry, ethnography, and the methodologies of cultural and human geography, which informed much of the theoretical basis for this project.

Poetry is thus tentatively proposed and critically examined as a means of representing and interpreting interview data by Eshun and Madge (2012). In their work in Ghana, they wanted to explore whether poetry might be 'a useful postcolonial [geography] research method' (2012: abstract) particularly for non-textual cultures (2012: 1422). To this end, they initially condensed their transcribed interviews into 'research poems', which were then re-written as 'interpretive poems'. In this latter form, the verbatim exercise was expanded to include imagery and wider cultural references (as well as the 'voice' of the researchers themselves), all of which sought to invite further interpretation and analysis (2012: 1402). They proposed that the research poem 'has the potential to convey the inevitable contestations (and agreements) between different social actors about a specific ecotourism issue' (in this case, the killing of local monkeys), where the wider scope of the interpretive poem brought in the voices and viewpoints from the whole community (including institutions) (2012: 1408). These poems were then performed to the groups that originated

them, who were further encouraged to make their own interpretive additions (2012: 1409), thus stimulating debate. Nevertheless, the researchers remain ambivalent about poetry's use in this field (2012: abstract), writing that their 'original supposition that poetry can speak with a community has become increasingly muddled, troubled and contested [which leads to] an uncertain, vulnerable and destabilizing position for the academic to inhabit' (2012: 1420). This ambivalence is reinforced in the concluding remarks, which state: 'this paper is less about poetry per se, but rather, it is an insistent call for more creativity as a key dimension to postcolonializing contemporary geographical research' (2012: 1423).<sup>17</sup>

#### Problems with this as a model for 'Poetry and the Archive'

Despite the similarities found in the above elaboration of poetry's use in social enquiry and data representation, it must be reiterated that my work constitutes a separate practice, which is artistically, rather than explanatorily or didactically, motivated. This is evinced in my self-identification as a poet, and by naming my work as primarily poetry. My process, therefore, necessarily developed beyond the re-arrangement of source material, where line breaks and paratactic/hypotactic syntax have been employed to offer an unproblematic, if non-standard, textual representation of unaltered material.<sup>18</sup> The impulse behind transcription poetry is sound, for:

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<sup>17</sup> There is an obvious ethical concern here, where Western researchers 'poeticise' the voice of the other. Although not working in postcolonial framework, I address the politics of 'voicing' another in the section on lyric position (page 93).

<sup>18</sup> This argument is more fully realised in the section on the poetics of narrative resonance (page 151), where I discuss the fact that my process resulted in poetry in which the sources were altered, sometimes beyond immediate recognition.

[w]riting up interviews as poems honors the speakers' pauses, repetitions, alliterations, narrative strategies, rhythms and so on. Poetry may actually better represent the speaker than the practice of quoting snippets in prose. (Lahman and Richard, 2014: 344)

However, this oft-cited concern to (re)present individual experience through verbatim usages, with its quantifiable 'faithfulness' to source, clearly differentiates my own strategies of representation from those of the social scientist, most plainly in the development of poetics which blended, involved and otherwise altered narratives from archive and interview into a new set of stories, acts or speeches.

It is important that I describe my work as primarily poetry and myself as a poet, naming these without the need for secondary tags that, in their use by ethnographers and others, makes plain the constraints of their dominant mode of enquiry. For example, although sociologist Margaret Vickers suggests that the compressed form helps distil the truth of her clients' perspective (2010: 558), she is careful to label her poetry with the qualifier 'non-fiction'. Neilsen's coining of 'Scholartists' (2001: 212) is telling in its directionality: for her, the scholarliness takes precedence over the art. Although scholartistry is described in positive terms, this does indicate that the author believes art cannot be an academic pursuit in its own right, for she writes: '[a]s poet-ethnographers, we have an opportunity to blur boundaries between the academic world and the literary world and to inform and re-energize both' (2004: n.p.).

Maynard and Cahnmann-Taylor identify ethnographic poetry as a genre (2010: 13) and themselves as ethnographic poets (2010: n.3). This particular use for poetry is further constricted when they explain that the poet ethnographer has the 'double challenge' of

writing well-crafted verse that must simultaneously maintain validity as a research result (2010: 12).<sup>19</sup> The first point has been undermined by Lahman and Richard's 2014 article on the research poem.<sup>20</sup> This argues that initially 'inferior' poetry is acceptable in the 'pragmatic, perhaps not artistic' space they define (2014: 345), a definition necessary in order to fulfil the second requirement. The uncertainties around the place of literary practices in the sciences are still pertinent. For example, sociologist Laurel Richardson was so closely questioned about the accuracy, validity and reliability of her poetic representation that she wrote an article about the experience (Richardson, 1993) in which she includes a dramatised representation of the question-and-answer session. The reported refrain of 'cannot accept your findings' (1993: 699) indicates how the structure of scientific enquiry could not allow her to present this work unchallenged. This further helps delineate the difference between this work of artistic development and enquiry and those projects detailed above.<sup>21</sup>

Finally, of course, the major difference between these poetic researches and this thesis is the inclusion of the Boulton and Watt archive, which provides a historical source of knowledge, as well as a further set of voices, to negotiate in terms of content, form and the politics of representation. This locates my work amongst the other poets responding to archives detailed in the contextual review, as well as allowing it to inhabit a simultaneous position as academic research, a position that demands the rigorous examination of the

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<sup>19</sup> Although they resist listing what makes 'good' verse, they do argue for the reading, and study, of contemporary poets in order to promote 'maturity in lyrical decision-making' (2010: 12).

<sup>20</sup> It is noteworthy that Lahman and Richard's term their creative work 'archival' poetry, because it is taken (as found poetry) from the 'archive' of the transcripts and secondary reading.

<sup>21</sup> There is, however, auto/ethnographic poetry where the researchers' own lived experience is used as source: see Miles Richardson (1998) for a good example. However, this kind of work is rarely offered without conventional academic exegesis.

researcher's voice. Because of this, I will now move on to discuss lyric poetry and the position of myself as speaker.

### On Lyric

Lyric poetry takes its name from the public Ancient Greek songs accompanied by a lyre. It is one of the three categories of literature defined in the early Romantic period (the other two being epic and drama (Jackson and Prins, 2014: 11)) and, since then, literary critics have developed many overlapping ideas of what constitutes poetry written in the lyric mode.<sup>22</sup> One significant strand of the debate concerns the idea, primarily from the nineteenth century, of an 'utterance overheard', with its sense of self-absorption, of 'turning away' from the listener (Jackson and Prins, 2014: 4). Temporal, as well as spatial, considerations come into play, for Sharon Cameron states lyric is a lone voice, 'speaking out of a single moment in time' (23). The received view, therefore, is of a poetry that is personal and introspective, if somewhat balanced by the ability of 'I' to be communal (Jeffreys, 1996: 201). For the purposes of this discussion, I am locating lyric as poetry written between Susan Stewart's definition of lyric as 'the expression and record of the image of the first-person speaker' (2002: 41), and Nerys Williams's note that, in the lyric mode, the self is 'the primary organising principle of the work' (2011: 27). Following this, and acknowledging that the lyric 'I' is often read as being the poet in some way (particularly in live performance), I will now examine the problems I encountered with lyric, first with myself as speaker/singer, second with lyric in general, and finally in terms of appropriation.

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<sup>22</sup> For a full account of lyric theory see Jackson and Prins (2014).

## Myself as speaker

This is a question of appropriateness of content. One of the strengths of poetry is its capacity for inclusion, to interweave individuality with communality (Eshun and Madge, 2012: 1412), and yet I was constantly aware of my presence in this creative process, and its potential effects. I was reader, listener, writer and editor. The imagining 'I' was me, no matter how many imported words or gestures coalesced in each poem. Alongside the qualitative researchers of anthropology, I wanted to avoid criticisms of 'narcissism, self-absorption, exaggeration, exhibitionism and self-indulgence on the part of the researcher' (Sikic-Micanovic, 2010: 3), tempered by ideas of art as self-expression, most seriously censured as 'a selfish, self-oriented and one-dimensional model [where] value and meaning are understood as reflecting the uniqueness rather than the commonality of the artist's experience' (McGonagle, 2007: 433).<sup>23</sup> This was a complicated negotiation. I experienced Cornwall's contemporary narratives every day, as both local and tourist, and so I had to find a location between the poles of celebrating myself as speaker (self-indulgent) and the attempt to eradicate myself from the work (impossible and therefore disingenuous).<sup>24</sup> Often, the strength of arts-based research methodologies is how they work 'in negotiation

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<sup>23</sup> A less censorious view of this is found in the 'Artists in the Archive Toolkit', which provides framing notes for collaborations between archivists and artists: 'All artists produce their work as expressions of themselves or a facet of their creative identity. The integrity of the work is as important as the authenticity of the archival materials used' (Tyas and Skinner, 2013: 4). It is also worth noting that section three of their toolkit, 'Towards a Collaborative Process' is, to date, a blank sheet with 'In Progress' written across it (2013: 9), suggestive of an open inventiveness and permission to play.

<sup>24</sup> In this extract from her process journal as she writes poetry from transcribed interviews, Laurel Richardson seems to share my impulse and consequent self-censure: 'I could write my own poem alongside hers [but] then the focus would be on me in a way that it should not be' (1993: 696).

between the public and private worlds' (Finley, 2008: 72), and yet there is no real mechanism to understand where one world ends and the other begins, particularly in creative writing.

Yet if we return to the initial, historical definition of lyric poetry being simply that which is written to be sung, both *Effects of Engines* and *Stamps and Stories* are arguably lyric collections, despite the presence of individual narrative poems. This fluidity of genre is supported by Ron Padgett who argues for a definition based on inspiration rather than form and reassures thus:

You will also come across critics who have formulated theories for the lyric that try to confine it to what it has been in the past. However, the things that poets feel strongly enough to sing about will change from poet to poet, from generation to generation, from town to town. (Padgett, 2000: 106)

With this, Padgett is not making any claims about what is being sung, or even what position the singer is taking. The emphasis here is on the engagement with the contemporary and the local, which fits the model of my work.

In 'singing' the work, I also drew on the idea of the ballad singer, who can present a poem in terms of a 'collective voice' (Redmond, 2006: 36).<sup>25</sup> This singer is, as Susan Stewart notes,

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<sup>25</sup> The idea, if not the form itself. Early in this research I reviewed the writing of ballads as a form which engaged with a story-telling tradition. However, I rejected it for two reasons. First, as an Anglo/Scots tradition, the form's history jarred with the (often strident) claim of individuality made for the Cornish landscape. Matthew Boulton and James Watt were Anglo/Scot respectively, and yet the representation of their culture (as opposed to their words) arguably strayed from this project's requirements. Second, the ballad's simple form exacerbated my early dissatisfaction with the



‘most radically haunted by others, for he or she presents the gestures, the symptoms, of a range of social actors’ (1995:41).<sup>26</sup> Of course, the ballad and the lyric are related, for as Steve Newman points out, ballads are, in themselves, a form of lesser lyric, and as such embody the ‘doubleness’ of the mode, where a blending of communal and individual language (2007: 3) can be found.

Performance poet Hannah Silva proposes musicality as one of three layers of the work’s delivery. The other two are the meaning of the words and the performer’s physicality. All three layers are perceived simultaneously (2010: 153), and, aware of this, I prepared live performances that would form a collection of stories with a musicality that eased both reading (mouth) and reception (ear). To this end, I chose poems that I felt offered the greatest amount of melodic, accessible imagery, to enable the most immediate recognition or empathy. This excluded pieces that depended on visual or page-based effects for meaning, which would have placed an unwanted barrier between the work and the audience.

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simplicity of my creative work, for I wrote poetry in this form when I was a child. It seemed reasonable to seek more complicated structures which would develop my writing and provide my contribution to knowledge.

<sup>26</sup> This lyric position, bestowed by performance, became problematic when the response of myself-as-poet was perceived to modify the work’s reception. This led to the work’s publication and dissemination in print, as outlined in the section on publication.

## Lyric in general

This wider lyric uncertainty comes from two directions, as it is present in both of the areas of enquiry that I have engaged with in this project: the composition and criticism of poetry, and the position of the self as researcher in qualitative research. The first anxiety is prompted by contemporary suspicion of lyric as a form, exemplified by the critic Marjorie Perloff's identification, and subsequent condemnation, of a 'formula' for contemporary lyric poetry, which is:

the expression of a profound thought or small epiphany, usually based on a particular memory, designating the lyric speaker as a particularly sensitive person who really feels the pain. (2012: n.p.)

Perloff may have a specific target here, in the work of Helen Vendler, who is a contemporary champion of lyric. Nevertheless, as Mark Jeffreys points out, much of the late twentieth century criticism that attacked the lyric did so by identifying it as a repressive genre that excludes otherness and history, both staples of poststructuralist literary criticism (Jeffreys, 1996: 198). In recognising that the lyric has the facility to remove the 'other' and 'history' from poetry's meaning, I can locate one source of the trouble that I had with lyric, as both are driving forces of this work. However, Jeffreys challenges this negative view of the lyric's capabilities, arguing that the boundaries of the genre are too unstable to be described with these absolutes (1996: 198). This saving instability eventually became apparent in my own work, when poetry from sources often worked with an 'I' that was not stable and often composite: the 'other' and the 'I' speaking together through layers of past and present.

The second source of lyric anxiety came from the other direction, where terms such as ‘faithfulness to source’, ‘poetic representation’, ‘artistic licence’ and ‘cultural appropriation’ all describe the same proposition: to write of moments, experience and opinions that are not mine. This concern is rehearsed by all writers of qualitative research.<sup>27</sup> Social scientist Laurel Richardson’s attempt to remain faithful to her source resulted in her writing poetry from the transcribed tapes of her interviews, to present ‘a transcript masquerading as a poem / a poem masquerading as a transcript’ (1992: 127). Although she found the union of poetry and sociology compelling she soon hit the familiar ‘[c]ould/should I write from this “Other” subject positions?’ dilemma she had tried to circumvent by using poetry (1992: 136). Eshun and Madge’s (2012: 1414) work with poetry and community resulted in the admission that their ‘original supposition, that poetry can speak with a community, has become increasingly muddled, troubled and contested’ (2012: 1420). One of the reasons for this is described as the ‘thorny issue of who speaks?’ (2012: 1415) where they identify the possibility of violation at the moment the words of the community are used to make poetry:

[A]ny claim that poetry can uncomplicatedly incorporate different perceptions of community members is [...] oversimplified: poetry is not necessarily more egalitarian

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<sup>27</sup> But not all poets. For example, Alice Oswald uses the words of others as a way to free her writing. In an interview about *Dart*, she states: ‘It’s made of scraps of talk from people who live and work on the Dart. Not entirely by me at all. I wanted to give the poetical voice the slip, to get through to technical, unwritten accounts of water’ (Brown and Paterson, 2003: 208). Of course, Oswald’s ‘poetical voice’ is never truly absent, but as a poet outside of the academy she is not concerned with theories which, as Peter Middleton points out, function as a ‘powerful sign of the legitimising role of the academy, able not only to explain what poets are doing, but to usurp their very creative subjectivity’ (1993: 132). This idea is returned to in the section on the classification of my poetry, where I argue for the deliberate resistance of the labels of academic literary theory, particularly during composition, in order for the work to follow its creative direction.

or participatory than conventional methods of social science knowledge generation.

It is potentially just as susceptible to asymmetric power relations, dominant voices and exclusions as any other mode of knowledge creation. (2012: 1416)

Ultimately, they conclude that poetry does *not* offer an unproblematic multi-vocality through decentring the role of the researcher. Thus they find themselves in accord with literary-based criticisms of the lyric mode, where any representation of the 'other', and that other's history, is easily challenged.<sup>28</sup>

Even a methodology built around writing in the lyric mode cannot avoid these concerns. In her chapter on 'Lyric Inquiry' (2008), ethnographer and poet Lorri Neilsen describes the use of lyric forms to capture and share knowledge. She argues for 'transporting a reader into a world, a mind, a voice (her own, or others') in the same way as does a fiction writer, a songwriter, or a poet' (2008: 96). Despite the distinction being drawn (once again) between a poet and a researcher using poetic strategies, Neilsen hones her argument to the point where my own anxieties about appropriated voices lie:

In a climate where concern for the protection of individual rights and privacy is at an all-time high, lyric inquiry provides new possibilities: poetry related to place, for example [can allow the researcher] to enter into an experience in the only way any researcher can [...] as herself, observing and recording. *She does not presume to speak for another*' [emphasis mine]. (2008: 97)

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<sup>28</sup> As an extra layer of challenge, it is worth noting here that it is not the 'other' who is being spoken for who has demanded that these poetic structures be examined in this way, but the academics' training in how speaking with another's words will be received. In this assumption of perceived mix-representation, the other's voice has once again been taken over, this time in a (perhaps completely imaginary) complaint.

As outlined above, I am not working entirely in the same academic framework as the social science and ethnographic researchers. As a poet, I could use the view of Peter Riley as the foundation for my interrogation of the lyric mode. He writes:

Lyric is one of the things people do to make life bearable. It is not a problem. It is not something to worry about as if something is being stolen from human commonality into a sole self. [...] The first-person is merely the sign, of authenticity, of presence, of initiality. (2002: 66)

Along with literary critics such as Peter Middleton I could further advocate the poet's right to speak 'for and to subjectivities, which are not wholly reducible to either emotions, language or actual persons' (1993: 132). However, this is an academic work and, as Tim Allen points out, theory in an academic context will always introduce questions of power (Lopez and Allen, 2006: 268). Therefore these concerns and categorisations brush against my own concerns about lyric and the politics inherent in my writing research. Neilsen might conclude that lyric writing as research encourages agency for both researcher and participants, but she also advocates conceptual processes that focus on metaphor and resonance, which, she argues, has a strong 'heuristic effect' for all involved (2008: 101). This signals towards my own work with process and resonance.

## Conclusion

As Gayatri Spivak points out, there are two forms of representation: speaking for (as in politics) and 're-presentation' as in art (1988: 275). She suggests that conflating the two is dangerous in political terms, since 'the poet and the sophist' (1988: 276) are both as harmful as each other, where their representations move between tropology (the figurative use of language) and persuasion (1988: 276). She finds some resolve in Derridean morphology where, by being aware of the easy dangers of approximation and assimilation, we can find a way of 'rendering delirious that interior voice that is the voice of the other in us' (Derrida, 1982, cited in Spivak, 1988: 294). This is the approach used throughout this work: to recognise myself and my influences in the poetry, to be aware of the mutability of 'I' (and the differences between the use of that pronoun in performance and on the page) and to make a conscious effort to prevent my voice from dominating. I tried to keep my own subjectivity in balance with the subjectivity of others, especially in poems that engaged with anti-English sentiments. Furthermore, in making the processual poetics of narrative resonance I endeavoured to access Derrida's 'voice of the other'. I also strived to be open about my concerns, to work through them in poetry, in the reading of academic sources from social scientists who explore similar tensions in their research, and in convening a conference which called for papers on the pleasures and tensions of working with communities, in an effort to 'continue to attend to whatever social and epistemological powers (in addition to what disabilities) may be activated by poetry [...] to affirm and help to sustain counterhegemonic identities, knowledges and commitments' (Damon and Livingston, 2009: 3).

I will close this section with the thought that lyric anxieties *should* be present in all knowledge-creation based (re)presentations of the Other, for their presence encourages awareness of, and critical reflection upon, the role of the self as source, selector and speaker. The influence of my own self, formed of my personal history and experience, will now be examined in terms of positionality.

## Positionality

In social science, it is a long-accepted principle that the researcher's biography affects their standpoint in terms which are relational and dynamic (Bennett, 2002: 142). As my personal history and background had an impact upon this work's creation and, ultimately, its outcome, recognition of my positionality is a vital part of my methodology. I acknowledge that my class status, family history, educational background and representation of self as an artist affected my interviews, particularly in the use of unstructured, conversational questioning where my background in mechanical engineering, my father's birthplace and my family in Roche were discussed, and then used as points of understanding from which to proceed. As Rachel Saltmarsh shows in her honest account of her fieldwork, she uses her own position and experiences to access her interviewees. When explaining that she is a coal miner's daughter to an ex-miner she has come to interview, Saltmarsh writes: '[h]is attitude changes, he relaxes, it's ok because I'm really one of them. I'm working class, but educated' (2001: 146). In her chapter, she wrestles with the split between working-class heritage and educated academic, which she names her 'fragmented and duplicitous identity' (2001: 146). She concludes that 'the future of academic writing must involve situating the self' (2001: 148). This situating included my physical self, from clothes to accent, which also factor in my positionality.

In considering how my physical body worked with the Bodies over the Tamar, I must turn to gender. I have heard surprise expressed more than once that a female poet has a background in mechanical engineering, with experience of heavy plant machinery and the vagaries of manual work. Interest in this became a good way to introduce myself to participants whose understanding of research using poetry was limited. Furthermore, my



gender arguably provided me access to spheres of knowledge from which a male researcher might have been excluded (although, of course, might have excluded me from others). As Dowling suggests:

Collecting and interpreting qualitative information relies upon a dialogue between you and your informants. In these dialogues, your personal characteristics and social position – elements of your subjectivity – cannot be fully controlled or changed, because such dialogues do not occur in a social vacuum. The way you are perceived by your informants, the ways you perceive them, and the ways you interact are at least partially determined by societal norms. (2010: 35)

I can identify moments when these societal norms influenced my data gathering. For example, I attended a steam fair where many different types of engine were on display. After a few brief words with an owner, and before identifying myself as a researcher, I was invited up onto the footplate of his engine. Later the same day, in interviews with two male enthusiasts, it was explained to me that this was a rare privilege. They had, they said, been on speaking terms with that owner for years but, they suggested with wry smiles, were too (undesirably) male to be invited to examine the engine at such (desirably) close quarters.

I also acknowledge that gender influenced my reading of the Boulton and Watt archive, and the selection of material with which to write. As Susan Howe points out, 'if you are a woman archives hold perpetual ironies. Because the gaps and the silences are where you find yourself' (quoted in Foster, 1990: 16-17). I searched the letters for mentions of women, of marriages and miscarriages, and ran a workshop with the Women's Institute in which these moments were discussed and used as source for creative work. Furthermore, I also

realise that when I approached strangers to ask for interviews at tourist and heritage sites, I would gravitate towards women. As most of the engineering-based interviews I had collected were with men, I rationalised this as not only redressing an imbalance, but an active search for different landscape interpretations. In this, I believed I was working with Massey's critique of the notion that any location has a 'single sense of place'. She suggests 'a woman's sense of place in a mining village – the spaces though which she normally moves, the meeting places, the connection outside – are different from a man's. Their 'sense of place' will be different' (1997: 154). And yet, upon reflection, these interview choices were largely influenced by a hesitation to approach unfamiliar men when working alone, sometimes in remote rural areas.

Although I felt that these female contemporary narratives brought a necessary balance to the archive's dominant male voices, it was only by reflecting upon my own bodily presence that I could understand how my gender was inflecting the creative output. This was made obvious to me when, after giving a reading at a research seminar, I was questioned on the presence of the domestic in the poems. I explained that the contemporary sources were all female interviewees. My questioner, an experienced researcher, then told me not to undermine my own presence in my work. However, as Susan Howe states, '[p]oetry leads past possession of self to transfiguration beyond gender' (1985: 138). As I moved into my poetics of narrative resonance, the gender of the speaker became either mutable or a self-revealing part of the composition process.

Part of being critically reflexive in research is to ask yourself, after the data collection, '[h]ow was I perceived by my informants?' (Dowling, 2010: 38). Following this, I was surprised in follow up interviews to be told I had seemed like a 'different person' when I gave the readings. I came to realise, through reflection upon my practice, that I did indeed

create personae for the interviews and for the readings, and that even in the writing of poetry there was an attitude not present in any creative work I had completed before this project. I have named these attitudes Listener Poet and Speaker Poet.<sup>29</sup>

Because each persona foregrounded separate aspects of my character, it was difficult to move smoothly from one to the other. Lacey (2010) provides an excellent model in her attempt to outline the continuum of the artist's position, moving from private to public role, where we move from artist as experiencer, to artist as reporter, to artist as analyst, to artist as activist (2010: 175). The first stage, artist as experiencer, is described as being a 'subjective anthologist' where the artist becomes a 'conduit for the experience of others, and the work a metaphor for relationship' (2010: 176). If I take her 'work' here to mean the gathering of material, rather than the composition, this conduit describes the initial persona of Listener Poet.

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<sup>29</sup> I have resisted bringing in the stages of reading and writing. Reading the whole of the Boulton and Watt archive did not feel like a poetic process. Writer Poet is tautological, and also feels like the default position that was being modified for the purposes of this project's community-facing work. Listener and Speaker are the alternating aspects of the body in the act of introduction, conversation and argument. These exchanges (between actors) need the individual exchanges (between listening and speaking) and it is this movement from one to the other that I wanted to capture.

## Listener Poet

*Poems are written in the sound house of a whole body, not just with the hands. So before writing, I always spend a certain amount of time preparing my listening. [...] Then, before putting pen to paper, I ask myself, 'Am I listening? Am I really listening with a soft, slow listening that will not obliterate the speaker.'*

Alice Oswald, cited in Rees-Jones (2005: 236)

Anyone without hearing difficulties might believe that listening comes easy, but listening needs cultivation and care. The ability to actually listen to what I was being told in the interviews developed over the first year of my research. Early on, when I transcribed my interviews, I noted how the most illuminating and poetically stimulating comments would often appear once the subjects had exhausted their own expectations of what the interview was going to be about. Each conversation opened with a discussion of local mining heritage, with a wealth of information about the practices and the locations, retelling of the archive's content, before the moving to the contemporary. I privately termed this shift 'tea break', named for a reward once the hard work had been accomplished. I realised that this positioning of personal material at the end of the interviews re-enacted the Boulton and Watt letters themselves, for it was often at the end of the letter, after business had been detailed and the moment had come to sign off, that stories of non-business life were included.

Because most of my first-tier interviews were with participants accessed through the King Edward Mine networks, they had much in the way of special knowledge and enthusiasm. Initially, I had wondered if this need to front-load our discussion with data was because the

subjects felt that they had to somehow justify their inclusion in the research by proving their specialist knowledge – that I was somehow ‘testing’ them. However, in reading back the transcripts and notes that I took, I noticed that this was not often the case: in fact, it seemed as though they were testing me. In later interviews, with a more diverse community of participants, I learnt that by listening carefully to queries about my status as a half-Cornish woman, or my attachment to the university, I could give timely reassurances that this was an opportunity to speak, confidentially, about whatever they wanted, and that – crucially – there were no right answers. This listening often generated conversations that contained the more fractious elements of nationalism and dispute. Furthermore, in these talks, my ability to listen was the best way I found to bring about a reconciliation between our different ‘speaking positions’ (Dowling, 2010: 32).

Thus the ability to listen in the information gathering stage of this project developed from a stance of simply receiving information into a deliberately generated attitude of reception, which, paradoxically, had much to do with speaking – with what I did, or did not, say. Although many expressions of my subjectivity and positionality were beyond my control, the mode of presence in the conversation was. In this fashion, I found my behaviour gradually altering, much like that of anthropologist who, reflecting upon her research process with women in a rural village in Croatia, writes:

I attempted to appear relaxed, pleasant and friendly while not appearing overly inquisitive, anxious or threatening [...] in an attempt to reduce the power

differentials, I was prepared to invest my own personal identity in the relationship to connect with research participants. (Sikic-Micanovic, 2010: 50)<sup>30</sup>

Similarly, my listening became an act of the whole body. Because of the unstructured format of the interviews, I hoped that the Bodies over the Tamar would be able to express the emotional landscape through being in the physical, and would invite participants to walk with me across the Cornish landscape, both urban and rural. In these roaming interviews, our bodies related to each other and to the landscape, with a view to, as in the words of David Michael Levin, widen sensuous intimacy and communion between ourselves and our surrounds, for:

by cultivating that potential in our sensibility for a mode of perception that is comparatively more global, more synaesthetic, more holistic and more deeply rooted in bodily feeling, we can constitute an object which is more fully, more comprehensibly situated in its relational field. (1989: 83)

Therefore Listener Poet should be understood not only as a poetic 'receptive stance' (Wirtz, 2012: 242), part of the compositional framework, but also nomenclature for a bodily expression of artistic reception and sense impression that would not be rigorous enough for a social science or geographical enquiry, but is absolutely necessary for an artistic one working with communities. As Barndt notes, 'deep listening' is an essential tool for the

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<sup>30</sup> I find it interesting that during his fieldwork anthropologist Nigel Rapport found it easier to describe his work as 'local social history' (2010: 87). This shows how the fluid the boundaries are in the collection of data for qualitative research. The disciplines seem to come to the fore once the data gathered is used to make meaning.

community arts practitioner, in order to 'go beyond the kind of self-expression often associated with art to expressions that are collective and community-driven' (2008: 360). This practice of quieting the artist's personal drives, she argues, is essential for the type of collaborative arts process she researches, where the community are hands-on in the making of the artistic outcome. Lorri Neilson Glenn, a professor of ethnography and a long standing advocate for poetry as data (see Neilson Glenn, 2008; 2004) also identifies this need to 'listen deeply', explaining how '[researcher poets] must put ourselves in the context, feel, taste, hear what someone is saying [...] we must be empathetic, aware, and not judgmental or hasty' (2004: np). However, Neilson has no space in her model for the Listener being changed by the act of listening. This lack is addressed by artist Suzy Gablik's argument for a 'connective aesthetics', evolving from examples of contemporary art process that listens to and includes 'other voices' (e.g. video and audiotape) (1995: 83). She writes:

Empathic listening makes room for the Other and decentralises the ego-self. [...] Art that is rooted in a 'listening' self, that cultivates the intertwining of self and Other, suggests a flow-through experience which is not delimited to the self but extends into the community through modes of reciprocal empathy. (1995: 82)

For Gablik, the connection that creates the work is brought about by a listening that reassures and empowers, but also creates a mode of work in which the listener is also changed by the process. Her model therefore not only looks forward to the Speaker Poet's persona, but chimes with my poetics of reciprocal empathy between narrative of archive and landscape.

## Speaker Poet

Speaker Poet is a two-fold role. First, it is the name given to the confident mode of composition that developed towards the end of the research phase. Speaker Poet here can be identified in terms of trust: not only an energising response to the trust given by the archive and interview subjects, but a trust in myself that I had listened well, and had understood enough to make work that honoured them.

Upon reflection, this self-trust was only possible once all the major sources had been assimilated into my own structure of knowing. At this point of the project, I had completed the reading of the Wilson Papers and was working continuously with the letters, using a chosen set of special-interest pieces in my workshops. The familiarity brought by these repeated engagements, in terms of historical moments and the immediacy of issue from the interviews, provided more immediate access during composition. Therefore although verbatim, cut-up and processual work continued, the Speaker Poet manifested in more sophisticated work with the narratives, utilising more of the internal artistic process to write poetry that was valid without declaring or highlighting source material.

It should also be noted that, at this time, my own position as a Cornish resident had solidified; I was a Body Over the Tamar, inhabiting the landscape and its narratives. This familiarity influenced my work, because I could understand, and thus better trust, the information I had received with which to write poetry. This also meant I felt more comfortable using my own experiences and observations as further source material, for, as Fisher states, '[i]t is not possible to not use your structure. Your own memory bank, if you like. Your own nerval feeling, emotional complex' (2013: 44).



Second, Speaker Poet is voice. The act of listening is based in receiving, but these poems and stories were created in order to be given back to landscape. Speaker Poet rehearsed this directional change. An example of this was found in the mode of field work, where I stopped taking the words of the archive out onto the mineral tramways route, choosing instead to take my poems and make an action of reading them aloud.

Thus Speaker Poet describes the action of making work to send back into the landscape that inspired it. This included the giving of readings and the hand-making of poetry chapbooks, which is outlined further in the Performance and Poetry Press sections of this exegesis. This act of speaking also featured in my academic contributions. As Speaker Poet, I closed my conference papers and academic research talks with poetry readings. This was not only to disseminate the creative output as well as the critical framework, but to realise a model of this project as a whole: research, followed by poetry and the collection of comments upon the work.

## ON CREATIVE PRACTICE

Having thus far offered the contextual and methodological framework of this project, I now turn to the creative practice. I will first interrogate the work's own contextual siting (pre- and post-composition), and then offer the series of events and decisions that informed my poetics. This latter section should not be read as a complete record of the work undertaken, but rather as an account of an artist's journey. The journey begins with concerns over the poetry's classification and culminates in a new method of writing which I call 'narrative resonance', and which operates between the archive and the interviews.

### Classification: Romantic, Eco-poetic, or other?

As mentioned at the end of the section on Speaker Poet, throughout my practice I was pleased to have been accepted to speak at a number of conferences, with each paper focusing on a different aspect of my work.<sup>31</sup> As Speaker Poet, I would close each paper with examples from my poetry to show how the theoretical work developed the creative outputs of the project. Often, the questions I received at the end of these presentations would inquire as to the classification of the poetry: questioners wondered aloud whether I was consciously working in a Romantic or eco-poetic mode, and, if so, how that affected the composition strategies and the content.

I concede that it is possible to provide readings of my creative work inside these frameworks, for any poet working with landscape must be open to a classical (Romantic) or

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<sup>31</sup> Please see Project Outputs in the appendices (page 258) for a full list of papers and talks.

contemporary (eco-critical) reading. However, my answers at the time were always framed in terms of resistance to these labels. This was for two reasons. First, I was writing poetry in response to sources which were neither Romantic or consciously ecological. It was important to me that the poetry was free to follow the syntheses to their conclusions without the guidance of externally ascribed classification.

Second, I was aware that any admission in terms of classification immediately opens the work to that classification's specific theories. This was undesirable in the creative phase, to avoid overburdening the poetry's function in relation to the project's goals. Considerations of literary criteria, objectives, conventions and aspirations would have imposed further constraints on a project already working under many of the above. In this reflexive mode, I find it necessary to now examine my practice briefly in terms of Romantic poetry, and more fully as eco-poetry.

The Romantics looked to nature as a source, but that was not their whole ethos. As Charles Taylor explains in his work on the evolution of modern identity, the Romantics 'affirmed the rights of the individual, of the imagination, and of feeling' through a 'notion of an inner voice or impulse, the idea that we find the truth within us, and in particular in our feelings' (1989: 368-9). The environment as a source that gives access to individual human feelings does describe much of my creative work. However, the 'source' is not aesthetic, or in any way divine: on the contrary, a post-industrial landscape is defined by its past practicality. My poetry does not try to work towards man in harmony with his natural surrounds: the very existence of the mined landscape precludes this reading.

As always, it is illuminating to find fellow poets working with the same question. Tim Cresswell opens the debate of his poetry's classification by querying his subject position as poet in landscape, as a literary history and political problem in his poem 'Earthwork'. In this

poem, the speaker compares the slow erosion by a river with the 'Quickwork' (2013: 33) of building-industry machinery. Wary of the possible Romantic reading as the speaker walks by a river, the poet pre-empts such a reading immediately: 'Being less Wordsworth and more flâneur, earth / leaves me small' (2013: 33). In referencing the flâneur, Cresswell deliberately draws the distinction between Romantic involvement in landscape and the more urban spectator, one who moves through the space without losing his/her individuality. Cresswell recognises the problem of such an opposition, and here reveals the anxiety attending twenty-first century sensibilities regarding the kind of tableau his poem depicts. Furthermore, 'Being less Wordsworth' is a succinct, even cunning, phrase; it allows the poet to deny overt Romantic readings by gesturing towards a recognised, faux-rueful inadequacy. We are all 'less' Wordsworth, it seems to say, because the contemporary understanding of earth (world) and earth (soil) can no longer elevate in ways beyond the physical. They simply leave the speaker 'small', for the relationship of poet/human to earth does not aggrandise the human by presenting his viewing (naming) of the earth, or showing his understanding of and sympathy for the earth (evidenced in the poetry); instead, we are given his smallness in relation to the larger systems and times of the earth.

The framing of Cresswell's rebuttal of Romanticism thus energises my own. My poetry is written to promote connection with the cultural, as well as the natural, environment of Cornwall. It strives to affect its reader with an awareness of how the politics of human life creates landscape, working between the history of the archive and the contemporary Cornish experience. Although the latter is often mediated through what is perceived to be the natural environment, this is an environment that has been formed by the human processes of mining. Similarly, Cresswell's poem, 'Earthwork', might close with images of human alteration of landscape, where 'mud is earthscraped / by bucketteeth' (2013: 33) to

create 'sudden topography' (2013: 33) but it is not the human intervention that is the poem's focus; rather it is the speed with which these changes are happening. This becomes clearer if we replace the word 'topography' with 'landscape'. Any 'sudden' landscape change – a landslide, for example – can be unwelcome as a destabilisation of the familiar, even as it can be culturally exciting. As such, Cresswell's poem does not need to be read as a clash between the natural and the cultural, but as I would further argue, such readings which reach for nature/culture divide are a reflex response which overlook the complexity of poetry that references both nature *and* culture. I will return to this debate in my discussion of eco-poetry.

### Ecopoetry

I now turn to the question of whether the creative output of 'Poetry and the Archive' should be classified as eco-poetry, and begin with considering my work in terms of contemporary ecological thought. Much of my poetry works with themes and images that one would recognise as ecological, such as wind farms, roads and building alteration, which became included not simply because they are common landscape features but because they connect to larger questions of power relationships. The decision to write about these subjects did not arise out of any conscious ecological agenda, but rather as response to the donated material and a reflection of the experiences I garnered while living in Cornwall. As the methodology section of this thesis details, I was concerned to explore the human connection, detailed in the quotidian, as the foreground for a working idea of landscape. In this, I am in agreement with Timothy Morton, whose *The Ecological Thought* (2010) proposes these connections as ecological, in the way that:

[e]cology includes all the ways we imagine how we live together [...] Human beings need each other as much as they need an environment, Human beings *are* each other's environment. Thinking ecologically isn't simply about nonhuman things. Ecology has to do with you and me. (Morton, 2010: 4)

Morton calls this interconnectedness the 'mesh'. His use of the OED's definition, which is 'a concatenation of constraining or restricting forces' (2010: 28) resonates with my own use of systems and processes to produce material.

Importantly for this thesis, Morton also describes connections that find their home in the poetry:

The ecological thought doesn't just occur "in the mind". It's a practice and a process of becoming fully aware of how human beings are connected with other beings – animal, vegetable, or mineral. Ultimately, this includes thinking about democracy. (Morton, 2010: 7)

My work did, indeed, become more aware of these connections as part of the practice, and sought to inscribe them. In particular, Cornwall is made of minerals, literally and figuratively; understanding the relationship between the organic and inorganic bodies over the Tamar became more purposeful when it allowed me to write poetry without feeling the need to foreground every piece of work with lines about the struggles and cost of mining. In this sense, Morton's use of the word 'democracy', with its suggestion of involvement, can describe the aspiration of the poetry created as part of this thesis, where a balance is sought

between the landscape and the landscape's perceivers, and between history and the stories of those who have inherited the effects of that history.

For some readers, understanding the theoretical underpinning of my project as ecological will immediately impose the label 'eco-poetics' on my structures of making, or that of 'eco-poetry' on my creative work. I dispute this. Nevertheless, the definitions of eco-poetry provided by Jonathan Skinner (2001) and Jonathan Bate (2000), will now be examined in consideration of how my work can be read in these terms.

Eco-poetry is one name for contemporary poetry that is environmentally aware, and yet, like most categories, its boundaries are porous (Bryson, 2005: 1). Skinner describes a simple need to seek subjects outside himself as a start of his interest in eco-poetry (2001: 5), but this soon leads him to argue that eco-poetry can find ways to re-describe our altered natural world, which is 'still suffering the assault of the industrial age' (2001: 5). This aspect of the category does describe my work on the Cornish post-industrial landscape, but does not account for the presence of the archive or the contemporary voices in the composition. It also frames the mining industry as an affront to the Cornish landscape, leaving no room for the identities of people and place that might (and do) celebrate Cornish mining heritage.

The absence of the human actor in this eco-poetry goes against poststructuralist responses to the ecological crisis, where a self is 'conceptually inseparable' from its ecosystem (Kerridge, 2013: 354). Such an oversight is partly rescued by Skinner's recognition and depiction of connectivity:

The developing complexity of perception is technology-induced, but it also arises from our awareness of a web of nearly unquantifiable interrelatedness that increases, ironically, with human fragmentation of that web. (Skinner, 2001: 6)

Here is Morton's mesh once again; but in Skinner's case there is a crucial difference: instead of treating the connectedness as an unalterable state, Skinner places the human in opposition to a more desirable mesh, one that existed before human intervention and is thus more 'natural'. Therefore, and because this limits eco-poetry to working within received ideas of nature, any poem which mourns or (perhaps worse) ignores the presence of working, sensing bodies in the landscape belongs in, and suits the exigencies of this category.

Turning now to Jonathan Bate, I take up the suggestion that we first identify an eco-poet by their compositional strategies:

Reverie, solitude, walking: to turn these experiences into language is to be an ecopoet. Ecopoetry is not a description of dwelling with the earth, nor a disengaged thinking about it, but an experiencing of it [...] ecopoetry is not synonymous with writing that is green. (Bate, 2000: 42)

The extension of Bate's point is that an ecology includes humans, an idea which prefigures Morton's 'mesh'. Though my poems were not originally written with an eco-poetic determination, and despite most of the words and meanings of the poems coming from human sources, I acknowledge that walking, solitude and even reverie have factored in my own writing process. And yet, once again, the voices from the archive and the Bodies over the Tamar prevent any easy positioning of my work as eco-poetry, because they, rather than my own 'experiencing', directed the poetry.



A more successful eco-poetic reading is enabled by Bates's turn to etymology, where he states: 'Ecopoetics asks in what respect a poem may be a making (Greek *poiesis*) of the dwelling place [for] – the prefix eco – is derived from *oikos*, the home or place of dwelling' (Bate, 2000:75). Although 'dwelling' here is being used in the Heideggerean sense, the archive's permissible association is activated, allowing this consideration of the Greek root, through the words for houses, to bring us back to Derrida:

But even more, and even earlier, "archive" refers to the arkhe in the nomological sense, to the arkhe of the commandment. As is the case for the Latin archivum or archium (a word that is used in the singular, as was the French "archive," formerly employed as a masculine singular: "un archive"), the meaning of "archive," its only meaning, comes to it from the Greek arkheion: initially a house, a domicile, an address, the residence of the superior magistrates, the archons, those who commanded. (1996:2)

As Derrida explains, the dwelling becomes the archive once the people who live there are given certain authority. Through my project's structures of making, I attempted to give the archive moments and the stories from Cornwall's contemporary landscape equal attention, for they are each accorded authority in law. Resolving this, we see that the archive's structures are themselves eco-poetic, in that they are deeply involved in the making of 'dwelling'—in the concept of home. For example, the Cornwall Record Office, as the county's memory store, keeps the records of all who have been born and died over the Tamar. As I have spoken to people who count their Cornishness by having six generations born over the Tamar, it is notable that such assertions of belonging are proved by the parish

records housed at the CRO. Thus, by this etymological consideration, my bringing together the archive and the environment does seem to be working in an eco-poetic mode.

Bate goes on to propose that poetry is the most obvious form for this conceptual home-making to take:

It could be that *poesis*, in the sense of verse-making, is language's most direct path back to the *oikos*, the place of dwelling, because of meter itself –a quiet but persistent music, a recurring cycle, a heartbeat. (2009: 76).

This returns the act of composition to the body, but also gestures towards my own use of Cornwall's cycles of water and mineral processing systems, using language and rhythm to bring a sense of place.

Finally, my methodology of material-gathering began in phenomenology, and the content of the poetry is often political in its consideration of land use. It is therefore helpful to note briefly, Bate's unpacking of eco-poetics in *The Song of the Earth*: there he describes his search for a 'more phenomenological than political' contribution of eco-criticism (2000:75) and the need for eco-poetry to engage with the wider considerations of gender and power (2000: 76). The theoretical framework and subsequent creative output of this project necessarily negotiate ideas of power (of the archive and of the lyric position) and of gender (as influenced by my positionality). Thus, Bate's call for the use of bodies over policies proposes a wider definition of eco-poetry that does, indeed, describe aspects of this thesis in design (methodology) and creative output.

Despite the above moment of recognition, however, I maintain my resistance to any categorisation of my work as eco-poetry. Andrew Forster, whose collection *Territory* is considered in my creative review, seems to share my hesitation. Initially he writes that:

[n]otions of eco-poetry were very much behind a lot of *Territory*, and our relationship with the natural world, and ways that we can explore that through poetry, continue to be of interest to me. (Forster, n.d.)

The key however is that eco-poetry remains present only as ‘notions’ and ‘behind’ so that, Forster takes two steps away from the category even as he ‘very much’ acknowledges it in his work. I argue that this is less of the throwaway remark it first seems, and is, instead, real concern about the work’s reception. All careful writers understand that classification not only indicates the work’s direction and, ultimately, the conclusion, but provides a taxonomy that allows faster conceptual processing and makes understanding (or a superficial engagement) easier. The undesirability of this to any poet is best voiced by Jane Sprague, whose words help to conclude this section on classification:

I resist ecopoetics. And definitions of ecopoetics. I resist it as a neat category into which one might insert my own work, like some car slipping into its slot on the freeway. It’s important here to mention gas, petrol, “birth of the crude.” To work towards a poetics of relation in a consciously ecological way. (2008: n.p.)

As Harriet Tarlo explains, Sprague's issue stems from such classifications becoming 'a limitation, a carving out of an area of "special interest" in terms of subject and form' (Tarlo, 2008: n.p.) and, in terms of politics, will only engage those who already share the work's opinions. Through her simile of motorway travel, Sprague beautifully describes my concerns about classification. To accept my work as eco-poetic would, for me, suggest that my work sought this smooth reception, through a practised safe-handling in terms of direction and speed, and had a clearly signposted destination. With Sprague, I maintain that what is good for motorways is not good for poetry, and so gently continue to resist classifying the work that was made for this project as eco-poetry, Romantic poetry, or anything else – except poetry.

## Poetics

*Creative writing research) needs to be undertaken with an openness to connections and exchanges of knowledge and understanding, a willingness to employ any number of investigative tools. (Harper, 2013: 289)*

I will now offer some of the thoughts, actions and processes behind the writing of my poetry, from the poems that seemed to arrive unbidden to the more structured processes used to generate material. This section can be read as creative methodology, for as Harriet Tarlo comments, '[m]ethodology is fundamentally a series of decisions made by a writer from a spectrum of possibilities' (2009: 115). Because the methodology of a doctoral thesis has its own conventions as a discourse on research methods, Tarlo is instead here describing choices I have called poetics. These, as Robert Sheppard suggests, are 'neither blueprint nor theory' (2008: 8) but my created structures of making should be considered part of the creative output of this project, as much as the poetry read at the events or printed in the chapbooks.

This view is supported by Charles Bernstein, who suggests that literary theory has (largely) replaced poetics as a model of scholarship, with anthologies of poetic instruction moving away from artist essays to favour philosophers and theorists. Thus, as Bernstein concludes, poetics has become 'another form of poetry' (2011: 76), one which generates a further site of critical study, and is therefore open to theoretical and philosophical interpretation.

To alleviate any sense of poetics being (in the words of Gerald Bruns) anthropological descriptions of 'strange practices and unnatural acts' (2005: 17), I remind the reader that my

poetics operates between all of the previously described areas of study, taking inspiration or mobilising internal logic from scholarship on archives, the Cornish post-industrial landscape, and the lessons provided by other poets working in similar modes. This is because, despite my attempts to keep the writing strategies as visible as possible, many poems seemed to arrive without being invited in any overtly procedural or mechanical fashion while working with one or more of my contextual sites. I will return to the idea of the ‘mystical’ poem presently. However, as the making came from the scholarship, I assert that my theoretical framework should be considered part of my poetics. As Peter Middleton states:

Theory challenges the sovereign self [...] Poets can respond by claiming access to a deeper, more mysterious field of inner psychic activity that mysteriously manifests itself into the material world [but] [t]heory turns its searchlight on the poet, reading his papers to see who s/he is. (1993: 125)

Middleton’s comments orientate back to the contextual review, and are important, for although not all of the creative work for this project was made using structured processes, all stemmed from consideration of specific source materials. These might even be understood in terms of Middleton’s ‘papers’, with their shared concerns with identity and authority.

I will consider, first, poems which ‘arrive’ without a conscious, structured system of invitation. It must be remembered that writing about any artistic practice calls for a balance between what can be explained and the elements that resist such exegesis. For poetry, in particular, expository difficulty is to be expected from any work that is not completely formulaic. Different poets conceptualise these arrivals in different ways. Mary Oliver

describes the intangible poem that exists away from the page, and draws distinction between 'the part of the poem that is a written document, as opposed to a mystical document, which of course the poem is also' (1994: 1). The idea of the mystical also appears in Jason Wirtz's essay on the compositional strategies of contemporary poets. Wirtz closes with an explanation of how, in writing in the academic register about the vagaries of artistic practice, he had tried to remain between 'prescription and mysticism' (2012: 243). The value in this, he concludes, is that 'while there is no algorithm for successful writerly invention, there are observable signposts, commonalities that writers speak to when discussing their idiosyncratic process' (2012: 243). For me, this not only gestures towards my hope that the processual poetic strategies that make up the body of this chapter, including narrative resonance, will continue to be used by other poets (as they have already been demonstrated in a number of poetry workshops), but also involves understanding that the quick, 'mystical' poem has a process in itself, just one that has become well-grooved, and therefore quiet.

I now turn to the use of metaphorical structures and compositional process in my work. These poetics have been an essential part of my negotiations with archival and lyric authority. As previously outlined in the section on the lyric, I began this project wary of being perceived as an appropriator of voice, to the extent that this anxiety was obstructing creativity. For me, the solution lay in making work that began with an externalised approach or 'process'. Conversely, poetic process was also used to assert authority, where playful games and strategies were developed as a response to the projected gravitas of the archive. This latter is examined more fully in the practice section on archive games (page 130). I will examine the former strategy, that of 'process', now.

By using process (external) to engage with my source materials, I initially sought ways to bring the historical and contemporary narratives together that did not completely rely upon my personal way of writing poetry, which can be considered process (internal). Huntsperger (2010) examines procedural form as a postmodern, post-individuality reaction to free-form work's suggestion of 'an unfragmented, unselfconscious, holistic artist who produces verse out of an overabundance of poetic feeling' (2010: 21). This description is pejorative in tone, and its point is clear. It is also clear that Tony Lopez's discussion of his montage and collage pieces would support the use of process to marshal the emotional realities of other persons in my work. He claims:

In order to make a composition that takes a step beyond simple self-expression you have to use a method, some kind of technique, that allows you to work. Otherwise it would be like personal confession or moaning or talking to yourself. (Lopez and Allen, 2006: 261)

These are the charges that I sought to avoid in my use of process, because perceived self-expression, particularly in lyric form, had become problematic in terms of authenticity and authority in wider poetics discourse.

However, as I will show in the sections on archive games, mineral processing and narrative resonance, I did not use pure, mechanistic processes in my work, but utilised them as compositional starting points. John Hall draws a helpful distinction between 'production' process (in which focus is upon the outcome) and 'ritualistic' process, where the 'sequence of moves is the event in itself' (1992: 41). All of my processual work is production-oriented,



for a completely algorithmic set of poetics for this project would not have suited its research aims.<sup>32</sup> As Fiona Sampson explains:

Verse which is entirely technique-led—rather than literally *informed* by technique, with all the necessary intimacy between thought and language that implies—may indeed preach an agenda *for* poetry; but it lacks the capaciousness of the open verdict. Its intent is single pointed [and] refuses to be brought back to life by readerly interaction. (2007: 3)

Samson's insistence upon the interplay of thought and language describes the poet acting as an organising consciousness, one who makes selections determined by need rather than randomised or machine-like factors. This is the view I promoted in public workshops, where we performed cut-up and intersection work with archival material. Here, I would suggest that the poet catalyses a reaction, so much more than simple selection and rearrangement, which results in change brought about by concentration. This moves the work from re-creation into creation.

The choice to write poetry informed, rather than completely generated, by my processes also responded to the need for my work to be affective. As Hall warns, 'concern with process places the value in the act itself more than in the outcome' (1992: 41), and that any knowledge generated by the work remains the preserve of the primary practitioners as 'special knowledge' (1992: 41). For a research project whose primary aim is to write poetry

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<sup>32</sup> By algorithmic poetry, I am referencing the type of poetic structure popularised by the French group Oulipo, *Ouvroir de Littérature Potentielle* (Workshop of Potential Literature) formed in 1960. Raymond Queneau, a founding member, outlined their aims as '[t]o propose new 'structures' to writers, mathematical in nature, or to invent new artificial or mechanical procedures that will contribute to literary activity: props for inspiration as it were, or rather, in a way, aids for creativity' (Queneau, 1986: 58).

that both recognises, and is recognisable as, works of place and story, the generation of such private knowing is obviously unsuitable. In his essay 'The Difficult Poem' Charles Bernstein defends a poem's right to be challenging to read, arguing that any struggle between reader and poem will be fruitful (2011: 5), but my work had to be understood in terms of narrative content, to promote ownership of the archive and landscape and to invite the listeners/readers to consider themselves in the moments that are offered in the poetry.<sup>33</sup> That being said, I do note that the poems selected for the second collection, *Effects of Engines*, are less obvious in this direction than those presented at *Stamps and Stories*. This is a result of both my learning to trust the audience to make the connections and my own poetic development in the time between readings.

I close this introduction by noting that the compositional models and examples of practice that follow can be read as a guide for any poet working between archival sources and contemporary narratives. They demonstrate a set of tactics, suggested strategies and attitudes that can be chosen from as the need occurs. Therefore it is presumed (indeed, hoped) that the reader might try some of my methods, to bring their own idiosyncrasies, experience, and idiolect to the process. In honour of these works-to-come I do not offer much in the way of exegesis of individual poems, other than to show their development in illustrative examples of process. In this, I agree with Robert Sheppard, who asserts, 'poetics is not explication or interpretation, which are the proper jobs of a reader' (2008: 5).

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<sup>33</sup> In the introduction to *Uncreative Writing*, Kenneth Goldsmith states that the emotion present in his work is not coercive or persuasive but delivers its emotional content 'obliquely and unpredictably, with sentiments expressed as a result of the writing process rather than from authorial intentions' (2011b: 4). Because of the emotional factors present in this project, I was unwilling to relinquish my authorial intention.

## Archive Games

As has already been suggested, the authoritative nature of the archive can be daunting. For me, this manifested in a sense of resistance to poetic use, despite the welcome I found at the Cornwall Record Office. This sense of resistance was exacerbated by the use of cotton gloves to handle the documents, by my initial difficulty in reading the handwriting contained in each, and by the sheer number of documents waiting to be read. I will now outline how this perceived resistance was recognised and, through a number of actions, overcome.

The material practices necessary to support the key principles of access and preservation demand that the documents are signed in and out of the strong room, defended against sweat or ink-marred fingers with gloves, folded between acid-free papers, and opened on cushions to keep spines from cracking. Even the handwriting seemed deliberate in its effects of distance and distraction, where the fluidity of reading to which I am used was disrupted by the close copperplate, the inscribed flourish. I once spent an hour copying the ornate Ds of Matthew Boulton, imagining him at his lessons with slate and chalk. I could have spent longer in these daydreams of connection but I was cognisant of the archive's volume, and therefore knew I had to keep reading, read faster, in order to read it all.

Revisiting my journals from this time, it is now clear that the number of documents that make up the Wilson Papers had become another site of resistance. There are over a thousand items, and I am not a historian, trained in the judicious selection of sources, but rather a student of literature, where one reads every page of the novel, every line of the poem, before beginning one's critique. And yet even historians seem to share this sense of being overwhelmed by material: Carol Steedman articulates a similar concern in her book *Dust*, on the investigative realites of archive work:

Not a purchase made, not a thing acquired that is not noted and recorded. You think:  
I could get to hate these people; and then: I can never do these people justice; and  
finally: I shall never get it done. (Steedman, 2002: 18)

Although I never felt any animosity toward the writers of the letters, I did begin my study with the disadvantage of thinking that each document would give me a poem. I had not understood the need to spend time absorbing the content and making my selections from a position of knowledge. This is partly because of the way the project's outputs were structured, with the expectation of poetry as exploration, but mostly due to my limited understanding of the layers of value pertaining to historical records. As MacDermaid explains, '[t]he symbolic value of a document which reinforces individual, community or cultural identity, often outweighs its informational value' (1992: 227). Laying down a letter without working creatively with the words felt, at that time, like I was doing something wrong.

So I read every letter, writing out my thoughts as I read, often repeating myself or reaching for something to say. Consequently, the creative work I generated at this time is dissatisfying to me, weighed down with references and biographical detail. As Pound might have warned, I was 'retelling in mediocre verse what had already been done in good prose' (1913: 201). As these stilted works continued I became disillusioned with the creative life of the project, worried that I would not be able to find a way past this urge to rewrite the documents, to demonstrate that I was working hard, working 'properly'. At this time, I gave a conference paper on the apologies examined in the creative review that show the poet

working in the archive, and so set about writing my own, which I will insert here in order to comment upon the content.

Dancing with Watt (Apologia)

James, there's a man at the desk watching us,  
watching my gloves move with pencil turned lead-out  
because my hands hold your writing and write  
about steps they want to pull you into. He's new  
I think, but his attentions tickle familiar. He asked for my pass,  
frowns at my tapping foot. I hum lower.  
It must have caused them much trouble and uneasiness  
when three lines of truth follow five of invention.  
They set history's terrier to chase my weasel words down  
but you say not to worry—that my engine  
is not visible, perceptible, but worth all the time  
because it works on paper. I could show him  
how our diagrammed dance has room for sidesteps,  
a thousand pages to burrow into, dig out of, humming  
and pulling you into our rotative motion, my method  
since you explained realism's failure – not anyone's fault,  
it just can't manufacture the correct parts  
without cracks and leaks, for nothing holds tight together  
except good reasons and us, bending. *Take it from me,*  
you say as we spin. *An inventor is someone*  
*who tells themselves a story with the ending left open.*  
Thank you for that. We turn again, twirl past the map table.  
The watching man is humming. His foot begins to move.

The problem I was having with the archive is present in the first line, where there is a 'man watching' the speaker as they work. (In fact, the majority of employees of the Cornwall Record Office are female and I was never 'watched over' by anyone.) This 'man', therefore, can be understood as the personification of a perceived patriarchal authority. If asked, I would have said I enjoyed my archival investigations, where the truth was that I was unnerved by the archive, both materially and philosophically, and had been from the very first day, when I had been signed in, been approved for my access to the documents and then handed my first pair of white cotton gloves.<sup>34</sup>

It became clear that I had to renegotiate my relationship with the archive, to show it that poetry can be defiant yet playful, respectful yet anarchic, and that poetry, in order to be poetry, must be able to slip the tour guide and wander at will. To do this, I made two actions. First, I stole a glove. Their use held me away from material I had to use for my poetry. I thought of this in engineering terms: how to wield a tool I cannot touch? I appreciated the reasons for their use, and was thus diligent. Nevertheless, the gloves seemed to symbolise the barrier I felt as I visited the archive and read the letters, where some force prevented my poetry from moving beyond simple statements of understanding. The theft, I should explain, was no great crime. My glove was one of hundreds kept in a cardboard box on the floor, sent away for washing once they have been worn, and, as my notebook records, the original idea was to write upon the fabric and send it through the cleaning process. However, this idea evolved into one of allowing a more permanent trace, so on my next visit, instead of tossing my pair at the end of the day, I concealed the one I

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<sup>34</sup> This has since been mediated by my understanding of the realities of archival practices, which revealed the care and generosity of archivists. Throughout my project I have had nothing but support and encouragement from the archivists at the Cornwall Record Office and Falmouth University, and in my correspondence with the Gloucester Record Office.

had worn on my right hand (my writing hand) in my pocket. I signed out of the archive. We went home.

Once safe in my study, I took the glove and examined it. It seemed too white, so I wrote my name on each fingertip, backwards, so it would print my name upon everything I touched. I opened my notebooks and pressed my hand over the lines copied from the archive, allowing the graphite dust to mingle with its woven strands. Later, as my understanding grew of the challenge the archive, I would come home and write the pertinent words upon its palm, its fingers. Sometimes the nearest pen to hand was red. Sometimes blue.

This exercise became an exploration of how the evidence of action can be so unwanted in one context and yet be celebrated as meaningful in another, which provides further analogy for the traces of industry left on the Cornish landscape and on Cornish cultural identity. My glove still sits on my bookshelf. It has become a totem of trace; it is dusty and the inks have blurred and faded so that the words are hard to read, but I know they are there.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> It is worth noting that archives are divided about the 'white glove', and since the conclusion of this project the CRO has ceased their use. My archive game, unnecessary now, has moved into history.



*Figure 4: Glove on the bookshelf*

The second action made with the archive also engaged with the idea of trace. Jenny, one of the archiving assistants, had kindly agreed to let me observe work behind the scenes at the Record Office. In the tight spaces behind the reading room, the controlled movement of paper is of obvious concern. Everywhere one looks there are pyramidal structures of rolled sheets and shelves of folders and books, all perfectly in their place. I was most interested in the white request slips, paired with their yellow carbon-copies, for I had filled so many out myself and thus wanted to see the process that left them in Jenny's office, tightly bundled and neatly boxed, recording the business of the archive until the box is filled enough to be sent for recycling.

At first I had understood these request slips as an extension of the archive, for, as Derrida notes: '[t]he archivist produces more archive, and that is why the archive is never closed. It opens out to the future' (1995: 45). However, these slips are *not* kept. Their



existence is temporary, held until the box is full enough to empty, like the need to breath out before another breath can be taken.

I explained my thoughts to Jenny over coffee, who immediately pointed out what I had missed: although the slips are destroyed, the information written upon them is not lost, because each is carefully entered into the CRO database. This record, she noted, is permanent. It was in the move from paper to computer that Derrida's ever-opening archive was to be found. I was keen to see myself archived-as-archive, so asked to see my record. We returned to the office and, with a few clicks, Jenny brought up my name and a list of dates and archive references.

This made me thoughtful. Once more, I found myself caught in a struggle with the archive's processes. In keeping me so tightly ordered, so carefully recorded, the archive seemed to be striving to keep me and my work tightly controlled. I'd stolen the glove to work around a *prevention* of my trace: could there be another performative act that could (harmlessly) disrupt this *keeping* of it?

On my next visit, I requested a bundle of letters from the Wilson Papers, soon retrieved for me by a member of the efficient CRO staff. Appropriately gloved, I took the folder to my table and proceeded to work with it for three hours – but without opening the folder. Instead of unknotting the ribbons, gently unfolding the letters and entering their preserved world, I used my situated experience as source. I made notes about the oddness of acting in this way, of the interest of the archivists and other researchers. I tried to capture how it felt to be in the archive yet, strictly speaking, outside of it, for as long as the document wallet remained closed. I wrote about myself, recording how I was sitting, what I could see, and how important it was to still wear the gloves, to write in pencil through their bulk.

I returned the bundle, signed out, and went home, satisfied with my afternoon's work.

My request slip was processed in the office, and so, thereafter, my name was recorded in the database. The extended archive keeps the fact that on this date, at this time, Annabel Banks worked on these particular Wilson Papers. But I didn't. This tiny, insignificant error, this disrupted trace, this professed accuracy that I know to be incorrect, worked to loosen the intimidating authoritative bonds I had felt since that first day.

After these two actions, the stolen gloves and the disturbed trace, I felt on more equal terms with the archive. I signed in and out, wore the gloves, and respected the rules, but these had shifted from feeling oppressive to easy courtesies, like the removal of my shoes when visiting the homes of certain friends. And as the authoritative structures became less meaningful, the archive became more malleable, open to being treated in less formal ways in order to make work, using an item that is anathema to the archivists' concerns of preservation: a pair of scissors.

### Found

Harriet Tarlo identifies found poetry as an eco-ethical practice, destabilising single perspectives in favour of multiple ones and 'building on knowledge, rather than constantly re-learning it' (2009: 125). This 're-learning' describes the difficulty I had encountered in writing poetry up to this point, and so, energised by my newly-negotiated relationship with the archive, I chose to begin again, and begin simply with found poetry. This was a deliberate means for me to not only destabilise the historical narrative of the archive, but to reinforce the notion that the poetry did not have to come from my responses to the

material for, as Tarlo concludes, found work 'insists that language is never one's own in poetic practice' (2009: 121).

I selected letters at random, printed them out and made erasure works, searching for sequences that brought a new reading to their content without losing their historical sense. I read erasure works such as Ronald Johnson's *Radi Os* (1977) and followed their models, keeping the spaces as part of the poem's form. I created cut-up poems from different letters, finding phrases repeated in slightly different ways across the archive and gathering them to make lists, and used the texts I was reading as secondary sources to make found poetry.<sup>36</sup>

The creative writing workshops I ran always began with making found poetry, once the letters had been deciphered and the handwriting had moved from unintelligibility to comprehension, because it feels transgressive and, at the same time, is simple and rather fun. In these led explorations, I asked the participants to refrain from using the glue to stick down their initial pieces, because I was taking them through my own stages of discovery. Therefore, after found poems had been made, I asked them to move the words and phrases further apart on the page. Through Derrida, I had come to see the archive not as a collection of individual letters, but a whole text, a complete structure of knowledge in itself, and thus open to deconstruction—to have its components spread apart to make room for a new meaning, one that overlapped or intersected the first, and this had led to my next strategy, called Intersections.

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<sup>36</sup> One of my found poems, 'The Heart is a Pump', was published in *Found Poetry Review*. The source text was *The Lives of Boulton and Watt* by Samuel Smiles (2007, first published in 1865). Please see Project Outputs section (page 259) for full details of the poem's publication.

## Intersections

The second stage of the found work was in the stitching of my own word and observations through the lines that were spread out on the page. First I did this with complete letters, without cutting any words, but using my computer to produce documents with large gaps between the lines. These I filled with my own ideas about what was being said, about my impression of the work and the men whose letters I was reading every day. Initially, this filled time as I waited to receive the approval from the ethics board that would allow me to begin working with my participants. Later, once I had my donated narratives of the contemporary landscape, I used those words to intersect with the archive. The following example shows an early poem created from a letter from Watt to Wilson, September 2<sup>nd</sup> 1783 (AD183/1/12), first in draft, then as a 'finished' piece.

HP  
I would agree with none

who do aspire to make this elemental  
hardships rely on surface tension

to keep the venture afloat  
upthrusts have to match the downward stroke  
those  
that have not a good

sense of earth's connection  
the oxidising fizz or granite's crack  
a course for more that's elemental  
that refills the puffed-out pools  
the great glut of gravity. The greater  
deal of water to draw

up and out and shown back to the air.

They are  
I am involved like four points of the compass  
give direction  
and in my opinion

we should always find an air of north  
the fieriest west, east to pull the hidden stone

these metal moments with south awash, drowne~~d~~ by drops and by degrees  
~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ too sudden to expose  
we should always find coals

for motion, wood for solidity  
rope and  
chain to drag out hesitation

~~and~~ leave it to moulder in untended corners  
and engine men

whose bodies bolstered with machine purposes and drive  
will run forever they bolt the future on  
and

provided you can get any you can trust ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~  
to take you with them  
will mechanise tomorrow

Like currents magnetism and deception

I shall turn the matter in my mind

and still agree with none.

Figure 5: Intersections experiment

### James Watt worries

He would agree with none who said this should be simpler:  
surface tension, for a hard ship, keeps the venture afloat.  
It's simply this: up-thrust must match the downward stroke.

They had no good sense of earth's connection.

Why not become oxidised? The fizz of granite, crack as course  
for more cracks to come. What else refills the poured-out pools

but the wanting of gravity, the greater deal of water, to draw  
up and out and show back to the air? It's a simple direction.

They're simple, like the compass points, and in opinion

would find an air of north, the fiery west, east to hidden stones  
and simple mud. Some souths are washed, not drowned  
by drops, or degrees too sodden to expose. Think him a fool?

Like currents, magnetism and deception, he tumbles matters in his mind.

They'd find coals for motion, wood for solidity, rope and chain  
to drag out cautious hesitation and leave it, desperate with rust,

as a boast of engine men, bodies made bigger by machinery's make  
and such drives will run forever. *Come, bolt the future on,  
we're off to mechanise tomorrow, a simple undertaking, yes?*

But still, he would agree with none who said this would be simpler:  
surface tension, for a hard ship, keeps the venture afloat.  
It's simply this: up-thrust must match the downward stroke.

These first works, where I introduced words from my transcripts and notebooks to the letters, were often brittle; I had brought together the two temporal planes, which sat uneasily together. When I gave my first presentation, offering the poems 'Introductions' and 'The Politics of Play', I received feedback that they weren't poems but rather 'just lists'. This concern over the perceived quality of artistic work as research is described in Piirto's 2002 examination of her work as poems or merely 'poem like' (2002: 443). Like Piirto, I took this feedback to indicate that the poetry was still overloaded with exposition and needed to be refined. The concept of refinement led towards the next set of poetics, concerned with repetition, in which I experimented with creative methods based upon the separation and refinement techniques of mineral processing. I will now explain these techniques in terms of inception (repetition struggles) and execution (found work and interview-as-ore).

## Repetition Struggles

While writing poetry from the archive and interviews I found that I was often repeating myself. The same images would arise, which was initially frustrating, despite repetition being a useful tool for the practising poet. Repetition, states John Redmond, is 'the simplest way to secure attention' (2006: 56) and has the goal of creating a 'sense of energy and excitement' (2006: 64), but the repetitions I was identifying in my work were often thematic and image-led, as well as at the level of individual words or phrases. Once again, I turned to the work of fellow artists to seek guidance, and was reassured that the presence of the archive itself invites ideas of repetition. Repetition, for example, is the drive behind performance researcher Deirdre Haddon's 2002 wish to experience Mike Pearson's site specific performance 'Bubbling Tom' (2000). Haddon went to the sites, gathered those who had witnessed the performance, and set about re-creating it with her repeated refrain of 'I was not there, but ...' (2002: *passim*). In this work, she recreates the acts that had taken place two years before, accommodating the landscape changes and her own new narratives into her act of mimesis.

Caitlin DeSilvey's use of mimesis was also performative, a 'physical and imaginative labour [which] picked up the remnants of place and made use of them in particular ways' (DeSilvey, 2007b: 42). In working on her Montana homestead she accessed the presence of the materials which she worked with, avoiding the 'methodological ventriloquism' (41) that I have been anxious to avoid myself. She asserts 'our acts of imitation, empathy and appropriation provided the conditions for the creation of a new understanding of material and place' (DeSilvey, 2007b: 43). Haddon and DeSilvey's mimetic repetitions are



performative whereas mine are poetic, but they find their origins in the same need to repeat in order to understand.

Eventually, it became clear that what I was actually copying were the repetitions of the processes of the mining extracts. I was surrounded by cycles and circles, by buddle brushes and the vanner's swirl. I was instructed (repeatedly) in the function and physics of double-action cylinders and other related engineering principles, which always end with the return of the piston as the beginning of the next stroke. Finally, I was watching the videos of the Boulton and Watt engines in Glasgow, visiting their Cornish cousins, and appreciating their cleverness in converting rotating motion into linear without realising that I was trying to do the same.

It was not, therefore, that my work was suffering from a limited range of images and thus experiencing some sort of creative failure, as I had originally thought, but rather that I was being drawn to the rhetorical device of *expositio*, where repetition of the same idea is used for effect. By returning to the same meetings, the same descriptions of fields and paths, I was unconsciously expressing a truth about Cornwall's landscape — that, for tourists, it is a place of returns, where a visit is never complete and must be repeated the following year (a phenomenon described in different interviews). For locals, it is place where the seasonal changes are marked by more than weather and vegetation, but by the arrival of the tourist. The pathways are looping, the precipitation cycle dominant, and because of all these re-experiencings of the same there will always be more to say. Only the content of the archive is fixed. Everything else was in continuous motion, and once I understood how this material was working I decided to treat it to further cycles, inspired by the refinement processes of tin mining.

## Mineral Processing

### Found Poetry

Harriet Tarlo argues that found poetry is prevalent in poets who are working with an eco-poetic bent. The poet, she argues, becomes a 'reuser, a recycler of words' (2009: 121).

Although I have taken pains to resist the label of eco-poetry being imposed on my work, I claim the use of reusing and recycling in my practice and material, which was introduced by the metaphorical application of mineral processing. In mineral extraction, the ore is drilled out, raised to the surface and piled into lorries or conveyors for transport to processing.

There is a huge amount of rock wrapped around the valuable metals, which is crushed and sent through a repeating cycle of extraction. Gravity separation occurs, which sorts the material into groups (rough sand, fine sand and slimes). Thus each cycle's 'waste' is reprocessed until the tailings are piped or dumped back into the landscape. The King Edward Mine Museum houses many different pieces of equipment in its mill, each a weapon in the battle to extract the valuable tin from the ore. Beginning with the heavy pounding of the California stamp heads, the mined material is sent around processes that cycle and re-cycle, where each pass through the round frame or across the shaking table further separates the denser tin from the lighter rock. I brought these processes into my work.

The first set of poems written with mineral processing in mind were lines taken straight from the archive and sent through a set of removals, tumbling them around to be refined. The results were pleasing when they worked, often ending in an epigrammatic manner, as in the following example:

## Makers

*In regard to United Mines we must persist also until they make a proper acknowledgement of their ill manners to us, you will therefore please attend their account expostulate with them & repeat your demand, if they make a proper apology and you can assure us the mine is really [sic] in distress we may be tempted to make them some concession*

A proper mine is also tempted  
your manners persist  
therefore please  
we must demand  
a repeat count. Make some concession.

Man makes  
therefore man mines.  
Repeat your lesson.

I repeated this experiment with interview material and with excerpts from my journals and notebooks, and often the resulting lines would become part of a longer work, much as refined metal would become part of a larger mechanism. Tin, in particular, is used in

mobile phones, and this connection between refined material and the means of communicating information is a gratifying resonance.

As a note on this process, I will add that I find it intriguing that I never made a connection between my looking at the poems of erasure by Joshua Poteat (examined in the contextual review) and my own process here. I take this as evidence of the strength of the metaphorical frameworks I constructed as I worked. For me, Poteat's poetry is firmly part of the archive, for I gave a conference paper that likened his erosions to Derrida's notion of the archive's repetition being part of a drive towards an archive, or self-erosion. This is evinced in Poteat's decision to keep the gaps, the indicators of the missing, in the poems' lineations, and this is where the separation lies, for my poetics here is not of the archive, but of the mining technology it references. This is not, therefore, a process of erosion but of refinement: the emphasis is not on the actions of removal, or on what is removed (which, unlike the mine-waste, can be reused), but on what makes it through to the next process of selection, for this is where valuable material will be found.

### Interviews as Ore

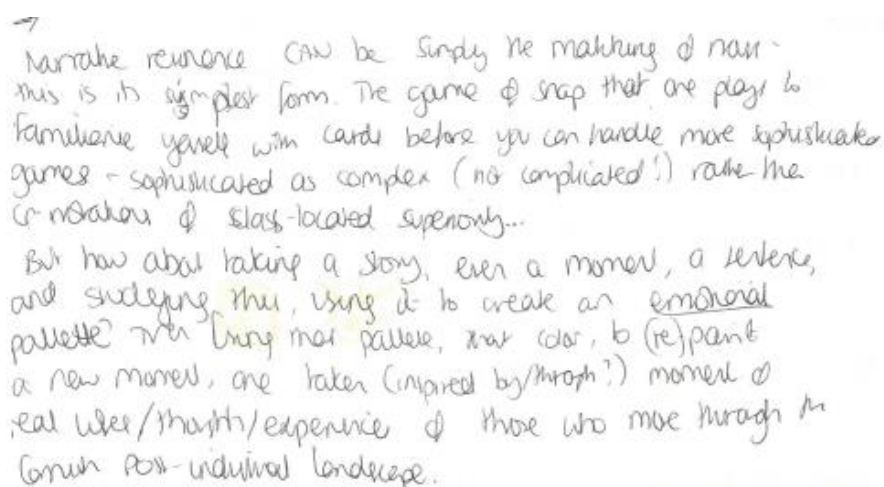
After embracing the use of mineral processing as a metaphorical construct I developed a new interview practice. When I had completed an interview, I would thank my participant and then retire to a quiet place to write very quickly, trying to gather everything that I could about the experience, not just the words that were collected in my recordings or in my notebook in a modified type of thick description (Geertz, 1973; Orley, 2009).

Writing in this fashion allowed me to write of their words but also collect the paralinguistic clues which contextualised them, for the content of the interviews was more

than our verbal exchanges. As we walked the mineral tramways considering the plants and minerals that surrounded us, or examined machinery, or looked at photographs of family members who were miners, there were moments of attention and connection that were not verbalised but were in need of capture. I wrote everything that I could recall: what we spoke of, what we saw, the birds or the coffee, what the air smelt of as we rounded to the river. I wrote as fast as possible, with minimal punctuation. One of the major advantages in this process was the speed with which I wrote.

In his work on the pre-conscious cognition of poets Sean Magee is interested in the many reports of composing at speeds at which it is too fast to think, or, as he qualifies, ‘too fast to think through consciously all the different aesthetic decisions that are making their way into the lines in question’ (2008: 182). Post-compositional editing is stressed as important in each case, as it was in my work. This was the ore, and, in composition, I returned to these sources, alongside interview transcriptions and the letters of Boulton and Watt, particularly for the poetic process that developed late in my practice. I have called this process narrative resonance, and the following section will describe what this is, how it works, and also critique the resultant poems in terms of authenticity and authority.

## Narrative Resonance



→ Narrative resonance can be simply the matching of nouns - this is its simplest form. The game of snap that one plays to familiarise yourself with cards before you can handle more sophisticated games - sophisticated as complex (not complicated!) rather than the connotations of class-located superiority...

But how about taking a story, even a moment, a sentence, and studying this, using it to create an emotional palette? Then using that palette, that colour, to (re)paint a new moment, one taken (inspired by/through?) moment of real lives/thoughts/experiences of those who move through the Cornish post-industrial landscape.

Figure 6: Notebook excerpt on the evolution of narrative resonance

*Narrative resonance can simply be the matching of nouns – that is its simplest form. The game of snap that one plays to familiarise yourself with cards before you can handle more sophisticated games – sophisticated as complex (not complicated!) rather than the connotations of class-located superiority ...*

*But how about taking a story, even a moment, a sentence, and studying this, using it to create an emotional palette? Then using that palette, that colour, to (re) paint a new moment, one taken (inspired by/through) moment of real lives/thoughts/experiences of those who move through the Cornish post-industrial landscape.*

P.S. You have not answered my query about steam engines in my last letter.

Dear Sir, you have left me hanging left me up like  
condensing to drip away I need to know about  
movement and balancing beams the uncertainty of  
cracked rock the sacrifice of coal. When I stand  
with my dirtied hands open I open my head, too,  
and bend towards you the knowledge of land and  
landscape and environment. I have a suspicion of  
hedges the flowers bend towards the ground like  
my questions and queries are enough to fill pages

Figure 7: First experiment in 'writing back'

*P.S. You have not answered my query about steam engines in my last letter.*

*Dear Sir, you have left me hanging left me up like condensing to drip away I need to know about movement and balancing beams the uncertainty of cracked rock the sacrifice of coal. What I stand with my dirtied hands open I open my head, too, and bend towards you the knowledge of land and landscape and environment. I have a suspicion of hedges the flowers bend towards the ground like my questions and queries are enough to fill pages*

The culmination of my work with poetic process is the development of narrative resonance.

This is a structured way of organising historical and contemporary narratives in order to

write between them. Narrative resonance finds its origins in my need to move beyond

poetry that was juxtaposing, rather than synthesising, the stories with which I was working,

my work with sound and reception, and my training in engineering. I was taught that objects

resonating at the same frequency look the same to certain instruments. Furthermore, I was shown how resonance at the same frequencies leads to increased vibration (which can lead to destruction), or, if the frequencies are matched but opposing, cancel each other out. This is the technology behind noise-cancellation headphones, where sound is generated at similar frequency to ambient noise in order to cancel the wave.

Consideration of vibration, as sound, is found in Shelley's 1821 essay, 'A Defence of Poetry', where he writes that 'there is a principle within the human being (and perhaps within all sentient beings) which acts otherwise than in the lyre, which produces not melody alone, but harmony, by an internal adjustment of the sounds or motions thus excited to the impressions which excite them' (1994, 365). Nancy takes this further when he states that timbre (the resonance of sound) is 'not a single datum. Its very characteristic is itself to be, more than a component, a composition whose complexity continues to increase as acoustic analysis is refined' (2007: 41). Applying these definitions, this process seeks points of narrative resonance between the letters and the material gathered in, and around, the interviews.

The process is as follows. To begin, part of a Boulton and Watt letter is selected and 'written back' to. This is designed to allow the moment to fill out, to take over space on the page and allow the vibration to become prominent. Once this has been achieved, the second source is introduced, often with a simple simile, such as 'and this is like'. The pre-selected interview material is then brought into the writing, captured quickly, trying to find a way of bringing the moments together in order to increase their vibration and result in a poem.<sup>37</sup> Often the imagery generated by this approach is integrated into other work, thus

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<sup>37</sup> These experiments often gave strong results, but more often failed. These failures were still valuable, for each attempt was a further move away from my earlier poems where the simple matching of nouns gave a point of connection between the letters and the interview material.



carrying its associative value into the new piece, for, as Fisher notes in the introduction to 'Gravity', poems can 'take part in interference and transformation patterns with each other' (2004: xii).

As the poem is edited, the first section of 'writing back' is removed. However, if resonance has been achieved, the archive is still present in the poem, not only because the writing direction was influenced by its content but because the material has been synthesised into a new thought. The past and the present sing together to communicate their stories, for, as Nancy suggests, communication is 'a sharing that becomes subject: sharing as subject of all "subjects". An unfolding, a dance, a resonance' (2007: 41).

This process often results in false starts: the resonance is either too strong and shakes the poem to pieces, or is angled in such a way as to cancel both narratives. And yet, when it is successful the poem can seem to generate itself, often revealing new speakers who have their own stories of Cornwall to share. However, narrative resonance is by no means automatic writing – a pretence to receive something that is outside myself and the sources I am synthesising. On the contrary, I believe that this process could work only in the latter stages of my creative work, once the archive's content and the stories of Cornwall had developed past an intellectual appreciation on my part. Wirtz (2011) interviewed poets about their process in terms of invention strategies and intellectual positions, and found a common 'receptive stance' that functions as an invention heuristic, where (in a time-honoured tradition that dates back to invocations of the Muse) the writer positions themselves as 'a conduit rather than as a constructor of language'. This stance, he argues:

adopts the epistemological view that the writing and the writing process are smarter than the writer. What is written holds the clues – the new associations – to what will

be written [where the poet] no longer seeks to consciously control the outcomes of his/her poetry, choosing instead to be receptive to what may come along, and thus, positions the act of invention closer to a pen-on-the-page moment of praxis as opposed to the more traditional view that writing discreetly follows thinking. (2011: 17)

This 'pen on the page' system does describe the compositional thrust of narrative resonance, where it is the very act of writing that brings the poems into being.

Narrative resonance also allowed me to write whole stories in complete sentences, without the abrupt and often destabilising moments from the archive that were present in the other ways of making. This was important to me, for, as Peter Middleton writes, the legacy of poststructuralist ideas might mean that undisrupted, connected sentence making is viewed with suspicion by political poets, but in working with marginalised groups such poetry can also be viewed as a 'radical strategy for creating collective actions' (1993: 121). I make no claims for my poetry to be radical, but the argument for my work to be readily understandable is partly political. Narrative resonance was developed in concert with anxieties over lyric positioning and the authority of the archival material overbearing the contemporary, small, less celebrated but equally vital stories on contemporary Cornwall. It is a strategy that, processually, takes my 'I' from the finished piece, and, in its ability to form 'composite characters' from across time and space (the archive; the tourist; the local) allows for an intimated, structural polyvocality that, nevertheless, gives the reader/listener one 'voice' to hear/read. It is also the most sophisticated strategy that I developed, which fits once more with Wirtz who describes the learning, and then sublimation, of the craft of writing as tacitly informing the receptive stance (2011: 19).

The decision to remove the top part of the poem, in which the most obvious references from the archive were to be found, worked creatively and satisfied me artistically, and yet I was concerned that I was erasing the archive from view. I knew that the Boulton and Watt material was fully present, underpinning the existence of all the contemporary composites, much like the history of Cornwall and its people had been affected, changed and underscored by the contents of the archive. However, without the actual lines of the letters, I wondered if I was doing the archive a disservice. To explore this, I turned once again to fellow poets. For example, the archives used by Alice Oswald in her composition of *Dart* and *Sleepwalk on the Severn* make no overt appearance at all: as Armstrong notes, 'Apart from the archive the poem itself produces of the various places of, and events that have taken place on, the river, *Dart* is not concerned with using memory as a means of storing the past in anything resembling a total or surveyable form' (2009: 195). This can also describe this thesis, where the poetry written does contain the past but not immediately, contained by a poetic strategy of building on the archive but privileging the contemporary stories in transmuted form.

I now turn to investigate the fact that, through narrative resonance, I produced poetry in which both the archive and the contemporary story were altered, sometimes beyond immediate recognition. Although it might seem obvious to insist upon a poem's status as a 'dramatic fiction no less than a play, and its speaker, like a character in a play, is no less a creation of words on the printed page' (Bower, 2014: 211), the transmutation must be examined, for within the framework of academic research, I am aware that such alterations are problematic and the writer could be accused of falsification. Concerns of this sort are evident in the verbatim works produced by the social scientists working with poetry, which I

examine in the methodology chapter. My answer to this is two-fold: first, in terms of social science, and second in terms of art.

Lanham et al (2010) consider what factors contribute to the perception that research has been carried out at a trustworthy level of rigour. They ask whether this trust is based upon 'rigorous methodology and analysis procedures' or through the 'experience and credibility of the researcher' (2010: 47). As a researcher, I strive to keep my methodologies clear, detailing research frameworks and subsets in order to offer a full account of a practice. In terms of experience and credibility, I have also developed as an academic by offering my work for scrutiny in the arenas of academic conferences and publication, and by organising the 'Writing Communities' interdisciplinary conference in July 2014. This was a deliberate attempt to create a forum for academics engaging with similar struggles generated by my own methodology and practice.<sup>38</sup>

I have also developed as a poet, and reflection upon this in terms of academic credibility seems to result in a paradox. The more confident and artistically sophisticated my work became, the more the sources were altered. One rather simplistic explanation is that the rigorous process is an authentic one, and the authentic artistic process must be permitted the alteration of its material, just as the painter must be free to mix the base colours in order to work successfully. Furthermore, the poems are accessible in their stories, but they are not presented in the form of stories. They are poems, and, as Barnie (2013) asserts:

Falsifying personal experience is what poetry is about [...] It is the words that have to be true and it doesn't matter how far they distort or diverge from the lived

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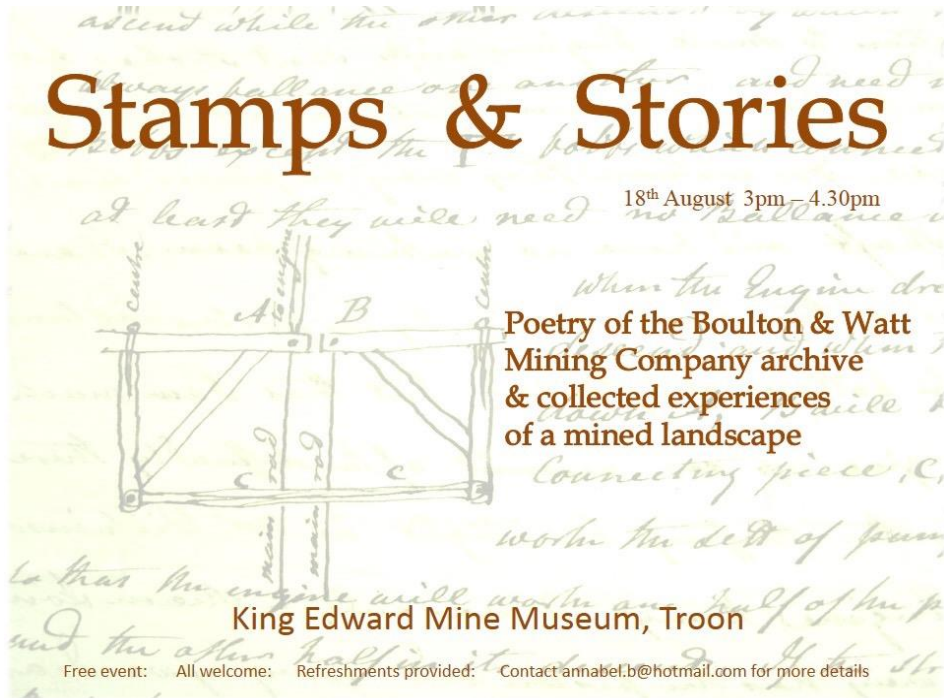
<sup>38</sup> The call for papers for Writing Communities is included in the appendices.

experience. Plato was right that poets are liars, but they are inspired liars who lead the reader to perceptions beyond the limitations of the self. (2013: 60)

In considering my poetry as acceptable, purposeful and recognisable lies which seek to move individual perceptions of landscape outside/beyond the vehicle of self, I find that I am once again moved to point out that the work created by these alterations is neither removed from the archive nor from the landscape. The poetry is a synthesis of materials. The materials are present in the resulting work. As Plumly confirms on the necessity for some truth in the work: '[p]oets cannot make things up. Poets make things *from* — from memory; from matter that cannot be changed, only transformed; from the rock of fact that may disappear, eventually, but that cannot be willed, out of hand, to evaporate' (2003: 25).

I will now offer descriptions and further thoughts on the two major readings I gave, 'Stamps and Stories' at King Edward Mine, and 'Effects of Engines' at Roskrow Wind farm, and show how the self-publication of the poetry from these events became an essential part of my creative practice.

## Readings



**Stamps & Stories**

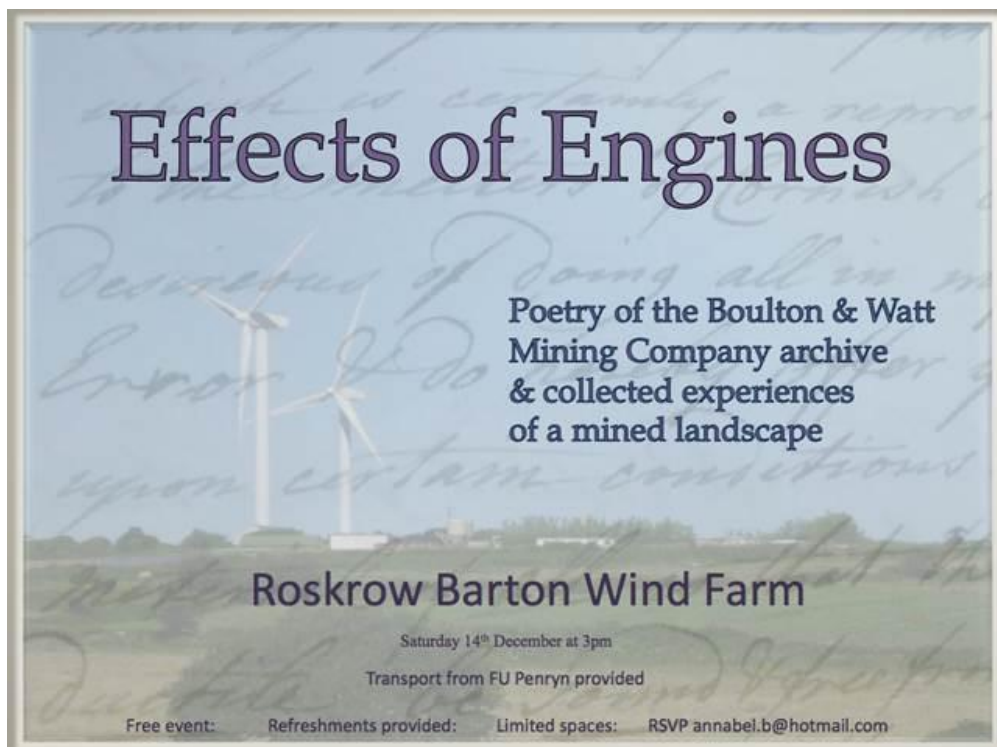
18<sup>th</sup> August 3pm – 4.30pm

Poetry of the Boulton & Watt Mining Company archive  
& collected experiences  
of a mined landscape

King Edward Mine Museum, Troon

Free event: All welcome: Refreshments provided: Contact [annabel.b@hotmail.com](mailto:annabel.b@hotmail.com) for more details

Figure 8: Poster for Stamps and Stories



**Effects of Engines**

Poetry of the Boulton & Watt Mining Company archive  
& collected experiences  
of a mined landscape

Roskrow Barton Wind Farm

Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> December at 3pm

Transport from FU Penryn provided

Free event: Refreshments provided: Limited spaces: RSVP [annabel.b@hotmail.com](mailto:annabel.b@hotmail.com)

Figure 9: Poster for Effects of Engines

In many ways, the research activities undertaken for 'Poetry and the Archive' can be considered as sustained conversation. In order to further this exchange of knowledge, I held two readings of selected poems: Stamps and Stories at King Edward Mine, Troon, and Effects of Engines at Roskrow Wind Farm. These readings were organised as a way to publicise the Boulton and Watt letters and to return the poetry to the landscape of Cornwall. They were also a chance for me to express my thanks to the Bodies over the Tamar who had donated their time and experiences.

After each reading I invited feedback from the audience, not only to get a sense of the work's reception and impact, but to ascertain if there was something I had missed in the project's direction as a whole. The responses, as will be further examined in the section on publication, resulted in the self-publication of two pamphlets. However, I will first offer brief descriptions of each reading.

### Stamps and Stories

Stamps and Stories took place at King Edward Mine Museum on the 18<sup>th</sup> August 2013. It was attended by approximately forty people, with ages that ranged from around two years old to people in their seventies. This number was boosted by the volunteers at King Edward mine, their partners and friends, the majority of whom had not known of my research or been interviewed. This is important to note, because these individuals were perhaps interested in Cornish mining history and its representation, rather than poetry. To capture this, my feedback form asked if the respondent had attended a poetry event in the last six months. Only five of the respondents answered yes.



*Figure 10: Stamps and Stories at King Edward Mine*

Stamps and Stories presented a selected body of poetry in dialogue with the material realities of mineral processing. King Edward Mine Museum houses mining machinery from the previous centuries alongside equipment and technology saved after the closure of South Crofty mine. Each machine has been lovingly restored by volunteers, and when set in motion the mill building becomes a place where vibration, water, metal and wood work together to separate tin from rock.

A volunteer at the museum, Nigel, generously and capably acted as our guide and my co-performer. His presence, as an ex-mining engineer and museum enthusiast, gave further weight to the poetry's interweaving of personal experience and mining technology. The



reading began with the running of the stamps, the huge machine that breaks open the ore by smashing it between metal. The running of this machine signalled that the mining museum space had become a space of performance, with its fearsome sound and rhythm. In the significant quiet that followed, I read my opening poem, 'Stamps and Stories', which is based upon the actions of the stamps, crushing, refining and re-forming the content of the interviews and letters. Then, as we moved as a group around the mill, Nigel gave an explanation of the equipment's function, running each one for a short while before I continued with my readings. By performing poems between the explanation and action of each machine I hoped to further encourage consideration of Cornwall's mining heritage as a base for contemporary landscape experience.



*Figure 11: A lesson on the Stamps*

I felt it was important that other voices were represented alongside Nigel's. With their usual generosity, Cornwall Record Office had allowed me to take an archival manuscript folder, pale blue and secured with a ribbon. Into this I placed moments from the interviews and archive, printed clearly on thick paper to suggest the presence of the Boulton and Watt letters. Then, in the spirit of interactivity and inclusivity that was designed to remind that

these words are not mine, I asked members of the audience to select a page and read the words. Between readings and machinery's rattle, the shaking table's motor, the soft creak and sweep of the buddle brushes, different throats and tongues added their motion to speak of mining, of landscape, of emotion and physical reality.



*Figure 12: A participant lends his voice to the reading*



*Figure 13: Nigel speaks of the mill control panel*

The reading closed with deliberations upon a defunct mill control panel from South Crofty mine. This panel was deeply familiar to Nigel as he had worked for the mine as a metallurgist. In his explanation of the panel's function he added his own story, and prepared a space for my final poem, in which a visitor to the museum notices the panel and questions **its** quietness against the rumours that South Crofty will be re-opened as soon as the price of tin rises.





*Figure 14: Final poem*

After the reading had finished I invited the audience for some refreshments, during which they had the opportunity to leave comments or questions on the work. I include just two below, as they demonstrate that the performance was seen by both the local and the tourist, and thus was successfully returned to representatives of the Bodies Over the Tamar.

*Although I am very familiar with KEM being the wife of a volunteer I still found myself looking at it with different eyes. I enjoyed the interaction of poetry and information, and the fact that the inspiration for the poetry came from the present as well as the past, and from more than just the mining scenario. I thoroughly enjoyed it.*

*I felt this was an imaginative way of presenting your work. Enjoyed the contrast between heavy industry/cerebral poetic; loss/vision of future. As a person just visiting Cornwall I enjoyed this insight into the industrial past. Thank you.*

### Effects of Engines.

Effects Of Engines took place on Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> December 2013 at Roskrow Barton Wind Farm in Penryn and on the Falmouth University Campus. With generous assistance and enthusiasm from Regpower's site maintainer Sophie, the whole event was intended to take place beneath the two turbines; however, the wind was exceeding expectations and it became clear that the poetry would not have been heard. Consequently, the event attendees spent thirty minutes exploring the site before being returned via minibus to Falmouth University campus for hot coffee, cake, and poetry. Fortunately, the building we occupied for the reading has large windows facing the turbines, so they could still be seen as the poems were performed. This was valuable as their presence supported the work's themes of power and rotation.

This series of poems, too, required another voice; however, this was no longer an overt attempt to represent the presence of others in the work, but rather the opportunity to highlight a particular speaker, The Archivist. Dr Kym Martindale had kindly agreed to read these poems, and so we stood in front of the huge windows, turbines behind us, and delivered the work divided between two voices.

After the reading had concluded, I again invited the attendees to record some thoughts on the event or project as a whole. I include two comments below which suggest that the reading proved successful in re-framing the familiar, whether landscape or historical fact.

*The visit to the wind farm was interesting – although it is a familiar part of the Cornish landscape one rarely, if at all, gets that close to one. I enjoyed the poetry with the interjections from the perspective of the archivist.*

*I enjoyed the combination of being into the landscape and the poetry, it helped to set the scene and root the words in place. Although I am familiar with the archive, the performance gave a new insight into something familiar. Elements of the poems transported me to points in Cornwall's past and landscape and brought them into the room.*



*Figure 15: Effects of Engines*



## Poetry Press: ChickenBeak Books

I will now detail the formation of my press, ChickenBeak Books, and the subsequent self-publishing of two pamphlets as an extension of my project's practice. As part of the event I had prepared brightly coloured leaflets with extracts from the poetry and a reminder of the background of the project. These were handed out as people filled in their feedback forms. I had meant these as a gift to thank the attendees for their time and attention, and was pleased by the eagerness of the audience to take these away. Later, as I gathered together the comments, I noted that some expressed a wish to read the poetry at their own pace:

*Would like to read the poetry published. More pleased I came than expected. Enjoyed repetition of some phrases e.g. 'rained incessantly' (the bit about beaches—never quite got that before.)Thank you.*

*Very good! Would like to read the poems!*

These appeals for publication of the poems were troubling, for I had been trying to place the poetry in poetry magazines and peer-reviewed journals but with no success. At the time, I believed this had something to do with the work's specificity, yet had not considered self-publication as a feasible alternative. As Wheale (1992) notes, small press publications often come about when 'the writing is of very restricted value or interest, and it rightly remains a local activity' (10). My project was based in ideas of the local, and in trying to publish my work in established journal and academic publications I was, perhaps, doing myself and my poetry a disservice. Furthermore, in the 2000 Arts Council report on poetry (Bridgwood and

Hampson, 2000) one respondent notes that it is important to them that the poetry is made available to be read after performance, 'because it is not always possible to understand it all straight away [...] I'm thinking about one line when the next line is being read and so I feel a sense of frustration and it's important to go into it more deeply'. I thus began to understand that the opportunity to read (and re-read) the poetry was part of its purpose, where meaning and recognition could develop over time, just as a sense of landscape ownership develops by repeated interactions.

Besides the positive request for the work I also noted comments suggestive of something more serious: that by reading the work at the museum and wind farm, the settings and performance decisions might actually have overtaken the effect of the poetry. In a way, each poem had been delivered with mining history and the Cornish landscape already fully present. Indeed, one could argue they had been co-readers, just as each reading had included voices other than mine. I include two examples from the feedback comments here:

*Enjoyed the different voices – could you develop this further for performance + or/ publication? Also liked hearing the technical side of the work and the visit to the wind farm. As an event this worked well as it broadens access to technologies that surround us everyday.*

*Really enjoyed it, thanks. Can see how it would have probably been more powerful for you to do the reading up at the farm. Would like to have the chance to read the work at my own pace as well.*

This problem can be dealt with by a superficial reasoning: my research question asks if poetry projects, rather than simply poetry, can promote knowledge of landscape heritage. The project, therefore, includes all research practices, including interviews and performance. However, reflecting upon these comments I began to consider the readings in terms of Speaker Poet, and ask myself whether offering the poetry on the page, rather than in supporting settings and without my physical presence, could be a valuable further development in work that had tried to be so mindful of the politics of authorial voice. In working through the ideas of lyric covered in the section on methodology, I explain why I was hesitant about using the first person in the poems. Yet there is always a speaking voice, and, in performance, that voice is unavoidably conflated with mine. The audience at my readings may thus have shared Wilkinson's experience: '[l]istening to public readings I can rarely take in much beyond the spectacle of the poet and his or her particular cadences, the gestural repertoire intimate with the lyric persona' (2007: 192). It was possible that Speaker Poet had become too effective, and was in danger of personalising work that was meant to be polyvocal and more flexible in its delivery.

Peter Middleton provides a clear line of argument here:

A spectre is haunting poetry readings. The "dead author", risen from the text again and trailing rags of the intentional fallacy, claims to be the originating subject from which poetry is issuing right in front of your eyes. At most poetry readings the author reads the poetry and firmly occupies the first person. (2005: 33)

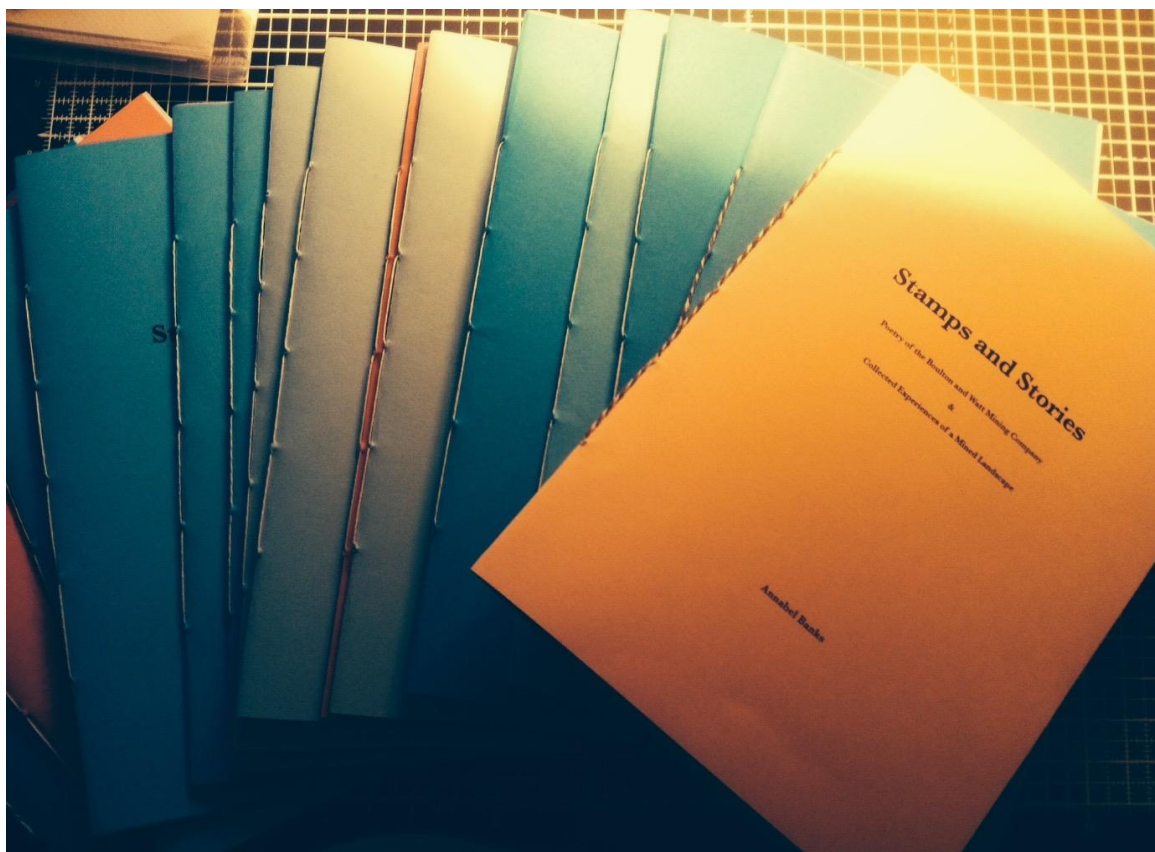
Offering the poetry as published work, not only to those who came to the readings but also to others who became aware of my work after this phase of the project had ceased, allowed

the poetry to be read without the intrusion of my physical voice: my own accent, a mix of my hometown's Estuary English and a more deliberate received pronunciation, as well as the breath patterns and stresses peculiar to my own sense of the lines' meaning. Middleton goes on to argue that the performance, with its physical space which has its own history, plus the physicality of the reader themselves, adds 'further semantic tracks' to the work (2005: 34). I was now curious as to the difference in reception the poetry would receive as printed matter, without these 'added semantic tracks'. Reading the poetry in a more personal space and at a more personal pace, I hoped that the reader would feel a connection to the work. As Speaker Poet, I had spoken to those present at King Edward Mine and Roskow Barton Wind Farm; now it seemed fitting to explore the idea that '[a] poem on the page speaks to the listening mind' (Oliver, 1994: 29).

I thus decided to self-publish the poems from the readings under the name ChickenBeak Books. The name is derived from the pronunciation of Falmouth (i.e. fowl-mouth), a running joke from family members when I began the PhD, for, as Wheale writes, '[t]he only opulence which small presses and magazines traditionally allow themselves is their names' (1992: 9). The title of my press thus links my personal history and practice in Cornwall, while also being a designation I can use to publish future work once my writing about Cornwall has reached its conclusion.

To achieve publication I taught myself how to use InDesign publishing software and began experimenting with different types of handmade books. Access to paper and card became vital as I practised my binding techniques and suffered through (mis)printing of the poetry. Jonathan Bate suggests that 'The price of art is the destruction of a living tree. You can't have music without dead wood. You can sing a poem to a local audience, but you cannot disseminate it more widely [...] without paper, papyrus, electronic reproduction

device or some other medium which has required the working over of raw materials' (Bate, 2000: 92). As I was making my books, I realised that I was indeed working over raw materials, and as such discovered a physical resonance to the way I had formulated my approach to this project. I had piles of pages for material that needed to be sorted, and organised my repeated actions with tools (needle into paper, sewing, cutting). My table became a processing plant, producing poetry as physical object to be sent to interviewees, given out at conferences and left at coffee shops, on buses and at heritage sites.



*Figure 16: Stamps and Stories as a handmade book*

This interweaving of past and future, material and meaning, accentuates the poetry's interweaving of letter and story, archive and present. By making these books, and leaving them places, I could offer the stories back, for those who wanted to hear them, without the

push of my presence. This time, I did not press recipients for feedback (although my details are on the inside cover of the pamphlets should someone feel moved to comment). They were a gift. Nevertheless, I was fortunate to receive further thoughts on the poetry in published form. I include here some of the comments collected from participants who received the books. More comments are collected in the appendices (page 258).

*The site sort of gave clear links and that was a bit distanced from the letters. The poetry book feels closer to the letters, perhaps because they are all on paper? It's like the words are more direct, like correspondence. It's a different experience .*

*I was surprised to see the word county—I remembered you saying it at the time and I knew there would be some people who didn't like it, but in the poem it's more obvious that this is Boulton and Watt I suppose.*

*When I heard you read it you had your own rhythms and pauses and way of saying things. I remember you made a fist and gestured throwing along with the words of the poem and when I read that again I remembered it and it made it more forceful. [but] mostly I couldn't remember a lot of the poems and when I was reading them I found my own little favourite bits, like the Trevithick poem.*

*Really useful to see the shape/ form- so I could try to find out what was archive and what was letters.*

*I liked reading the first poem again. I understood what was happening with it in the performance but it was good to pick those up again and follow them through the poems*

*I think I wrote on my feedback that I would have liked to take away the poems.*

*Perhaps I wouldn't have thought of asking for them but you gave us those leaflets and they had the words set out nicely that I wanted to see how you had arranged the rest on the page. And I wanted to read them again too.*

*I could see the shape of the poems. I could try to find out what was archive, what was letter—like in the Stamps and Stories poem, how they were working together, getting mixed up.*

*It's really for me, what I like, having the material thing. I love books, paper. Words and letters. Without a recording [of the reading] the artefact means I can return to it. The reading had its clear links because of where we were, and was more distanced from the letters. The poetry book feels closer to the letters, because it is paper and words. There is more of a direct correspondence. It's a different experience. I feel like the performance was close to the mining history, with the machinery and the direct mentions of Boulton and Watt, but the books feel definitely closer to the archive, and it brings me with it.*

*If I had had the books after the readings I would have gone home and read them straight away. I liked guessing at what was archive and what was modern. You gave us clues on the page. It was like a treasure hunt.*

*I found my own words in the poetry when you read it and I am so pleased to have them written down. I think I have found myself again in some of the other ideas. Only you and I know what we said and I think that's lovely.*

*It was good to read the poems again, to see them written down and the way they sit on the page. It makes such a difference to read them after hearing you read them. The bits you repeated, bits about rain, I see them and remember the reading. I have found a lot of new ideas in the poems now I can read them.*

*I had fun on the trip to the wind farm but the mining performance was stronger, for me. But I prefer reading the engine house poems. They work really well on the page. Your questions about feeling more connected to Cornwall. I would probably answer that more strongly now. Because I can see your connections and it makes you think, doesn't it.*

It is noteworthy that comments returned after publication were more detailed than those left after performance, for it makes sense that the ability to read at leisure, and to offer thoughts on the work without being rushed between coffee and cake (and without the poet standing at their shoulder) allowed for a more thoughtful response. These comments show



that people appreciated the handmade book, and felt they could get closer to the poem's language. For example, there is a query about the use of the word 'county', which is a contested word from a Cornish ethno-nationalist perspective. However, this word was, indeed, extracted from the letters of Boulton and Watt, and the judgement between source and subject is well made. Further to this point, the ability to see the poetry's form, including line breaks, seems in some cases to have altered the reception of the poems. For example, one comment suggests the poems became 'like a treasure hunt', as the reader decided which lines come from the archive and which from interview. As some of the poems performed were written by the process of narrative resonance, either source would have been harder to identify; however, other poems are built around more obvious inclusions (often marked by a word's orthography) that might have provided some pleasure when spotted. I had not anticipated this style of 'unpicking'; on the contrary, as I had been working towards a method of smoothly synthesised source materials, it was something of a surprise. Yet I found reports of this type of engagement with the poetry gratifying, for it meant that these particular readers were aware of the archive as they read, and I could thus hope that such extended consideration of Cornwall's past would not only enrich the experience of reading the pamphlets, but also continue to have a bearing on the 'real world' of the Cornish contemporary landscape.

I will end this chapter on practice with a final point. In the comments, an interviewee expressed pleasure at the recognition of their words in the poetry. It is a fact that only this particular Body Over the Tamar and I know what was discussed as we walked the mineral tramway, but I would hope that poetry from that conversation is more resonant and thus recognisable to all Bodies who heard or read the work, whether Cornish, living in Cornwall or a visitor: this was an intention of the poetry and a driving force behind the development

of narrative resonance. I will now offer my conclusions, including further thoughts on whether the poetry succeeded in the task of promoting critical consideration of Cornwall's past and present.

## CONCLUSION

As has been shown, 'Poetry and the Archive' comprises two interweaving and sympathetic strands. The primary strand concerns the writing of poetry. The poems collected for this thesis, and many others not included here, strive to represent Cornwall in their use of archive material from the Wilson Papers, further historiographical investigation, as well as contemporary narratives gathered by interviews, observation and my direct experience of living and working in West Cornwall for four years. These poems have been presented in performance, exhibited as static presentation, and disseminated as printed material that, in the guise of a gift, was actually payment to those Bodies Over the Tamar who allowed me to walk with them, question them, and experience life in Cornwall with them. Selected works have been offered back to the county that inspired it and have become, in Derrida's formulations, part of the deconstructed archive.

The secondary strand of investigation was to ask if poetry projects such as 'Poetry and the Archive' are useful for the promotion of critical ownership or understanding of cultural heritage. It is to this question I will now turn: I will first critique and reaffirm the use of poetry for art-based community engagement projects. I will then offer selected participant feedback, not as evidence that the project provided or captured any lasting cultural effect, but that the work, through subject and affect, poetically engaged with consideration of Cornwall as a place whose landscape is constructed by the effects of its practical past and the continued interactions of all Bodies Over the Tamar. Leggo (2008) insists that '[t]he evaluation of knowledge generated in poetic research will include [...] a conscientious consideration of the resonances that sing out to the world' (Leggo, 2008: 171). Consequently, I argue that the question of whether this project promoted a critical

understanding of Cornwall's landscape and heritage could not be answered by collecting responses to its poetic outcomes, but by a wider consideration of all of the poetic activity that brought the poetry into existence.

I thus begin with a defence of poetry, particularly as an art form that has much to offer community-based projects. Work can be generated relatively quickly with no need for specialist equipment or additional personnel. Because everyone with a basic level of literacy has the capacity to write poetry (and even those without it can work within the spoken-word genre) it is also suitable for public workshops. For example, as part of 'Poetry and the Archive' I ran a number of sessions where I provided archive material and bespoke exercises. The participants varied in age and ability, drawn, as they were, from two schools, a public event at the Cornwall Record Office, and local poetry groups. The different levels of experience and expectation made each session a new challenge and, as the selected feedback below suggests, succeeded in its aims of promoting the archive and wider thoughts of the Cornish landscape:

*Formulating glimpse of Cornish history from a different direction. Although not a poet [I] will certainly be inspired after today.*

*To reach different groups in Cornwall is necessary + desirable to use different access approaches. There is already quite a powerful body of visual and aural/oral art in Cornwall but words in poetry rather than song are, I think, the missing art form. And they 'vibrate' in the reader which is a powerful way to link humans with history.*

Thus, as the feedback comments suggest, poetry can bring its power to resonate across political or experiential divides. It can offer moments from a life contextualised not only by factual information, but by judicious use of imagery and form. This is the reason for the continued interest in poetry research by social scientists, as examined in the methodology chapter of this thesis, who identify the potential hybridity between the practices and crafts of poetry and those of ethnography (Maynard and Cahnmann-Taylor, 2010). For these, the capture of a thought, moment, or point of view in poetry can be a fruitful extension of lifewriting.

Furthermore, the unpredictable reception of the poetry once written also offers the researcher new sites of interest. For example, in her argument for poetry as a way for geographers to create world-writing that balances ‘passion and politics’, Clare Madge points out that a poem allows for a ‘hybrid, multiple simultaneous interpretations – both by different people and the same person (re)interpreting a poem differently at different times and in different places’ (Madge, 2014: 180). Thus the geographer’s concerns of space and place add a new layer of understanding to a truth poets have always understood: that, unlike in performance, we cannot control when, where, or how a poem is read. In my own case, once the books of *Stamps and Stories* and *Effects of Engines* were distributed, they were completely out of my control, and were left to work contextually with the readers’ experiences of the Cornish landscape. This is appropriate, for, as Stephenson makes plain:

All who would initiate change on a community scale or seek to galvanise individual and social learning must confront an awkward, if not embarrassing, fact; that they do not (and should not on grounds both of human dignity and individual freedom)

control how others behave in response to their aims and actions. (Stephenson, 2007: 90)

Despite these claims for poetry's suitability for this type of community engagement work, it may be argued that any advantage is reciprocal. The Arts Council have commissioned reports into contemporary poetry, which, although now some decades old (1996 & 2000), describe a problem with poetry's image that is, in my experience, ongoing. There is a perception of poetry as 'gloomy, irrelevant and effeminate' (McKeone and O'Brien, 1996: ii) and of being 'minority, elitist interest, not something the general public could enjoy' (Bridgwood and Hampson, 2000: 109). These views are encapsulated in the comment 'when people hear the word 'poetry' they immediately 'switch off'' (Bridgwood and Hampson, 2000: 109), which is a sentiment I have encountered many times, in my pursuits of both an academic and a personal poetic practice. In considering these comments, it can be shown that community-based poetry projects provide an opportunity to counteract these views and demonstrate poetry as a more enjoyable and accessible venture, as I will now detail.

First, I do not mean to suggest that the requirement for the poetry's need to be accessible and enjoyable should override the authenticity of the artistic endeavour. As 'Poetry and the Archive' is a funded project to promote a particular landscape, I had expressed some initial concerns to my supervisory team that I was being expected to write the 'poetry for tourism' criticised by Jodie George (2010). In her article, George argues that poetry has been used to romanticise any controversial aspects of a location and warns against the commercialisation of place and language that gives rise to 'oversimplification, proscription and commodification' (2010: 11). This is a particular difficulty in writing about Cornwall, as has been noted in other research: in a 2010 AHRC project examining writers

and place, one participant complains that writing about Cornwall can be seen as trite, because it is 'so unique and so well known' (Brace & Johns-Putra, 2010: 410). Following this, he then identified an undesirable 'Du-Maurierisation' (Brace & Johns-Putra, 2010: 410) aspect to his creative work, which he then strove to excise.

However, my enquiry into the historical meaning and everyday practices of the Cornish landscape required more than a polished, tour-guide view of beaches, pasties, and cream teas could offer, and instead sets out to be celebratory in its inclusivity. This inspired poetry that might have 'gloomy' aspects (such as concerns over Cornwall's poverty), but were written in response to authentic sources.

In considering the perception of poetry as being 'effeminate' (which, in this case, I take to mean considered mainly a female interest) I remind the reader that my status as a female poet and the gendered inflection this brought to my work has already been examined in the section on positionality. I concede that, although different genders were represented in the audience for 'Stamps and Stories' and 'Effects of Engines', the feedback data agree that there were more women than men (and only two who preferred not to identify themselves in these binary terms).

It is, of course, impossible to know whether more men would have attended, for example, a theatrical performance or an exhibition of visual art based upon the same sources used for my poetry: but my suggestion that community-based poetry projects provide a route through such perceived barriers includes those constructed by received ideas of gender determination, and is supported by the feedback forms. These show that most of the attendees, of any gender, had not been to a poetry event in the last six months. This indicates that direct involvement, or the involvement of family and friends, in the project's research activities encouraged attendance at an event that might otherwise have

been seen as undesirable. As one man (aged 60+) who attended 'Stamps and Stories' commented: 'I am glad I came and especially so since I've begun to read poetry with more understanding.' Thus it can be hoped that the success of such events, in terms of simple enjoyment, might help dispel some of the negative views of, and encourage interest in, poetry.

I will now move to close this thesis by examining some of the feedback provided at my events and from recipients of my chapbooks. But first, a reminder. This project's knowledge is poetic. This is not a work of sociology, even though I use an ethnographic framework to describe my interactions and aims. It is not a work of philosophy, even though I made use of Derrida's deconstructive attitudes and a phenomenological methodology based upon Merleau-Ponty. And it is not a work of cultural geography, even though it shares many hedges with that field, finding inspiration and permission from the cultural turn of academic enquiry into how human interactions shape the landscape. Donnelly (2013) states, '[k]nowledge which is acquired by the creative writer through her writing practices is [...] difficult to communicate in the often narrowed essential ideal of quantified scientific analytical methods and measurable outcomes generally associated with traditional academic research' (Donnelly, 2013: 123). Because of this, the following close-reading of feedback should not be read as a qualitative assessment of results but as further reflections upon my creative practice.

In the feedback I received throughout this project, I was fortunate to have some very enthusiastic responses. Many people wrote that they enjoyed the poetry and the performances as artistic expression and local cultural event:



*Very sensitively and powerfully delivered. A saying ‘Open people’s eyes a little and they will see the picture’. You opened my heart a little today.*

*I had little interest in Cornish mining even though I’ve lived/visited Cornwall for 20 yrs but now I find myself absolutely fascinated!!*

Such responses are, of course, gratifying to any artist. However, the need to operate within a critical framework led me to design a questionnaire with a focus upon the work’s critical reception, as a way to refine the poetic processes I was designing for each stage of the project.<sup>39</sup> As Jenni Burnel suggests, ‘[o]utcomes of cultural action cannot be guaranteed: there is nothing inevitable about the action of art on people’ (Burnel, 2013: 145), so space was provided for further comments and complaints. I will now look at three pieces of feedback in detail.

The first comment I wish to examine was offered after the performance of ‘Stamps and Stories’. This participant wrote:

*I don’t feel more connected to the past, I think. What struck me was the more present day statements around poverty, politics, identity etc. that really struck a cord [sic] and was worth saying and rarely said.*

I am aware that the first sentence suggests that any wider idea of the poetry’s cultural effect failed. Despite my work’s use of the Boulton and Watt letters, and, by extension,

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<sup>39</sup> A copy of this is provided in the appendices.

elements of Cornish mining history, the participant did not feel more connected to the Cornish landscape in terms of its industrial heritage. However, it should be noted that the audience of Stamps and Stories comprised many people whose interest in mining heritage, when not part of their employment, is certainly more than a hobby, with attendant social groups, events and publications. It is therefore possible that this person's knowledge and understanding of the mining past of the Cornish post-industrial landscape is already at saturation point. If this is the case, this renders the latter part of the statement more valuable. As the contemporary narratives were 'worth saying and rarely said', i.e. not surprising in their content but familiar enough to have become a kind of cultural background noise, it can be argued that the reframing and presentation prompted this moment of recognition. Poverty, politics and identity are interwoven in the poetry to resonate with the experience of Bodies Over the Tamar, and to have them strike a chord (a metaphor of sound and resonance) is the intended purpose of the poetry, and thus this feedback helped support the processes I was working with at that time.

The next comment I will examine states:

*I found the poems connected the Cornish and mining history/heritage and landscape with the present day as well as looking at the future and current issues. I learned more of the mining past of Cornwall and gained an understanding of Cornwall through the poems and words and experiences of the people at the mine. Today I experienced how the landscape of Cornwall and mining are interconnected + how the people of Cornwall (Cornish and visitors) link + connect to both aspects.*

This piece of feedback indicates that this participant was sensitive to the effort of synthesis in the work, and to have them comment upon the interconnectedness of all the Bodies Over the Tamar is especially heartening, as it suggests that the poetry's enhanced scope worked.

The final comment I wish to examine is from correspondence with a participant with whom I had walked the Devoran to Portreath tramway. While writing with a request for more copies of the poetry books, she took the time to tell me she had since re-walked the tramway, writing:

*The buildings tell a different story every time you visit don't you think.... sometimes they are in sunlight and you can imagine a busy day in history and it all working and then sometimes on a grey day they strike your heart that they are now really a thing of times gone by and have such a significant footprint in our lives... I hope the buildings last for many generations to come and that your poetry and books etc., last for many generations to come and I would love to be able to leave the poetry you give to me for my future grandchildren with a little note from yourself inside, that would be rather special wouldn't it?*

Here, for my participant, this project has become another layer of her experience of the Cornish landscape. A family-oriented Cornish woman, her Body Over the Tamar has made other bodies, and those bodies have done the same, and the grandchildren are, in some way, a further archive; one that synthesises genetic material and memory. Thus, as Susan Stewart argues, it is in these material ways that poetry is a 'force against effacement—not merely for individuals but for communities through time as well' (2002: 2).

In examining some of these feedback comments, I have demonstrated that the poetry has activated different aspects of various people's understanding of Cornwall's historical landscape and the culture that is inflected by that landscape. Therefore this work agrees with previous findings (Matarroass, 1997, Kay, 2000) that arts projects can improve the way people feel about where they live. The historical knowledge and the 'feeling' of a cultural heritage were the aspects brought to my work through the Boulton and Watt archive, which then functioned as a grounding source for poetry that reached forward in time and told the stories of today. However, while I assert that artistic engagement with communities and archives can engender a further sense of critical understanding of a place, and I repeat that I do not make claims that my poetry healed any rifts, soothed any hurt, or gave any answers to those who are seeking ideas of the future in a county that is troubled financially. Poetry cannot do these things: poetry can be inspired, written, read and heard, but it would be dishonest to take the positive feedback comments and use them to show that my words changed anything. As Leggo states:

Poetry is not a healing lotion, an emotional massage, or a kind of linguistic aromatherapy. Neither is it a blueprint, nor an instruction manual or a billboard. There is no universal poetry, anyway, only poetries and poetics and the streaming, intertwining histories to which they belong. (Leggo, 2008: 1157)

In this apt description of my work, I find that the 'streaming, intertwining histories' describe the action, the composition, and the hoped-for resonance of the poetry's life and afterlife – perhaps left for grandchildren, perhaps left to rot, unread, in the rain – and in either case now part of the expanded archive of Cornwall.

My final point is one of consideration of the poetic project as a whole. In asking people for their participation, and in the development of Listener Poet as an artist's tool, this project provided thoughtful space in which people considered their ties to the landscape around them. This might have manifested in the desire to show knowledge of mining history, or in locating their political viewpoints in terms of nationalism or as resentment against the incomer, or incomer resentment towards hostility. It might even have found a satisfying expression in the rejection of landscape influence altogether (see 'Exception' in the Stamps and Stories collection, page 225). The promotion of a critical engagement with landscape heritage was, therefore, present from my first interview. Whatever was said, it was the action of being *asked and then listened to* that prompted thoughts of Cornwall – receptive, critical, affectionate, familiar or new – rather than the promise of poetry.

Further evidence of this effect was found in the emotional turns, including tears, in the interviews and workshops, generated from stories around ownership of landscape features rather than personal tension or unhappiness. The tears, as I understand them, were not of sorrow, but an expression of being emotionally energised by having Listener Poet invite conversation about where they live. We all step on the same ground this way over the Tamar, perceiving bodies in the same phenomenological field. However, having an opportunity to be listened to – really listened to – by someone with no ostensible political leanings, who assures you of your anonymity (and signed an official-looking form to that effect), gave rise to certain feelings and provided a space for their safe expression. Therefore – and despite the body of work, the publications, and the development of a new way of writing poetry between narratives – perhaps the cultural value of this project is not really found in its poetic outcomes; rather, the work has should be seen as a continuum that began with the proposal, then moved through the levels of activity including interviews,

academic presentations and performances, and is even now continuing as part of the expanded archive of Cornwall.

### Personal Development as a Poet

Over the last four years my poetry has improved in craft and consideration. I am proud to call myself a poet, and proud of the work included in this thesis. Furthermore, the time spent in Cornwall engaged in self-reflexive practice developed my (now strong) sense of possessing a capable artistic fluidity that can move as the area of inquiry moves, without losing connection to the subject (be that person, place, object, concept) being questioned by my poetry.

The process of practice-based research involves continual questioning, continual self-reflection and the prompt to be courageous. It also develops good working habits. I still write every day: I may write and be dissatisfied, or I may write and delight, but I will always write. This is because my sense of self as an artist has expanded, which is a direct result of this considered engagement with my own creative impulse.

### Poetry and the Archive

The body of creative work that now follows brings together disparate viewpoints and stories of what it is like to be in Cornwall, either temporarily or permanently, in these early years of the twenty-first century. Poetry written from the Boulton and Watt archive and the interviews makes no claims about the generation of community cohesion, but is rather an expression of shared ownership of the landscape's history and cultural heritage. This works

toward a reaffirmation of Cornish identity and a bridging of the narratives of the tourist, the incomer and the local.

I have argued that the very act of gathering this material, through the sustained attitude of Listener Poet, prompted critical engagement with Cornwall's past, present and future landscapes. This engagement was reaffirmed and returned in the poetry, where narratives were synthesised and juxtaposed in further explorations of the landscape and the experiences of the people who live, work or visit there. As has been shown, my explorations, practices and performances have been directed by my conscious engagement with authenticity and authority. Negotiations with power are behind much, if not all, of this work, and so it is fitting that I now close with a quotation found early in my reading, and which had a strong influence on the direction of my research. Taken from human geographer Robyn Dowling's work on qualitative research, it reads:

[p]ower enter[s] your research through the stories, or interpretations, you create from the information you gather. [...] The stories you tell about your participants' actions, words, and understandings of the worlds have the potential to change the way those people are thought about. (Dowling, 2010: 32)

Such changes are, of course, a stated aim of this project, but my hope is that the work carries a sense of the care taken with these issues. The desirable outcome would be for a reader to re-recognise themselves and others they know; to find the poetry thoughtful, authentic and appropriate; and to encounter ideas about Cornwall's past position, present state and possible future within each poem.

In a final addition to Dowling's comment, I would remind the reader that 'participant' reaches beyond the interviewees to include the writers of The Wilson Papers, whose minds shine so vibrantly despite the faded ink, and the landscape of Cornwall in its many guises: post-industrial to rural, aspirational to troubled, summer sand to winter flood, holiday to home.



# POETRY AND THE ARCHIVE

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### Dancing with Watt (Apologia)

James, there's a man at the desk watching us,  
watching my gloves move with pencil turned lead-out  
because my hands hold your writing and write  
about steps they want to pull you into. He's new  
I think, but his attentions tickle familiar. He asked for my pass,  
frowns at my tapping foot. I hum lower.  
It must have caused them much trouble and uneasiness  
when three lines of truth follow five of invention.  
They set history's terrier to chase my weasel words down  
but you say not to worry—that my engine  
is not visible, perceptible, but worth all the time  
because it works on paper. I could show him  
how our diagrammed dance has room for sidesteps,  
a thousand pages to burrow into, dig out of, humming  
and pulling you into our rotative motion, my method  
since you explained realism's failure – not anyone's fault,  
it just can't manufacture the correct parts  
without cracks and leaks, for nothing holds tight together  
except good reasons and us, bending. *Take it from me,*  
you say as we spin. *An inventor is someone*  
*who tells themselves a story with the ending left open.*  
Thank you for that. We turn again, twirl past the map table.  
The watching man is humming. His foot begins to move.

## **The heart is a pump**

and a great source of terror to commercial men  
(it was clear no help was to be looked for in that quarter)

yet I am accustomed to various experiments. It will be thus observed  
the hissing, fiery little machine continues to correspond

despite imperfect mechanical manufacture of the day  
three way cock, slide valves and valve clacks. Study the fire engine,

some enabled model capable of executing this race, the double  
vessel with advocate beat. I could supply him with dolls' eyes,

this disgraceful state of the coinage. It's a subject I cannot speak to him  
about. He ought to come hither, the proposed partnership,

the infusion of young blood with power and majesty. Order,  
despatch, and the appetite for knowledge. More, I do not violently desire.

All words from *Lives of Boulton and Watt* by Samuel Smiles (1865).

## Talking The Tramway

i

Here is a foot. Here is a tyre,  
here is branch where a secret berry shouts  
its hellos in crisp colour. Hello. Hello.

Here a bicycle, we worry for the owner.  
Here is a horse for step        stone        brush.  
Ride on rounding rides the flat. Hello.

Here are some women in celebration colours,  
listening and whistling the wanderer's delight.  
Here is a wall that belongs to a wallet —  
                         angles mathematical  
                         green up the edge,

and hello to a capped shaft looking like a beehive,  
a wrapped head of heather that blossoms in the cold,  
by the broken wiring that don't bother them badgers  
anyway, do it?

Or the bats below.

ii

So  
make  
a ticklish  
skittish skid  
round a sucker muddled puddle,

watch for babies in those backpacks  
getting hooked                    a new hello

and sing like a wheel with a chain on a pulley,  
push on like a tramway delivering its loads.  
The trace of the trackway, leaf-spine-lined  
dropped-frond deliberate            stem-way to go

and here the valley plunges, the curving of a smile,  
the valley's arms are open when the bricks turn gold.  
Not yesterdays, but everydays of wintersun and wishes  
for feet and hoofs and tyres and roots. More secret sweet hellos.

## Seal Hole

It's about spiteful water eating metal  
heaviness, solidity could solve troubles  
if tended well – but who is to blame?  
For there may be complications. Instead,  
drill two deep holes, fracture granite between  
to rush cold water through clean hot rock.

It's always about power. The industry  
dropped its oiled and gilded jaw:  
*We can't believe it. Thirty years ago?*  
Of course we were. We are innovators.  
Mine school, engineers, pioneers. Could've even  
fixed a bigger problem before they saw  
how deep granite shatters for water's course.

As Seal Hole acid water burnt  
and ate like anger against the consequence  
of chemistry the payment for power,  
there was more talk of violence  
They made healing suggestions but who could say,  
and who would pay for these under-takings?

Later, for one glowing moment the whole county became  
the concrete bubble poured over Chernobyl  
great danger of it being melted by carelessness.  
Yes. dumped at depth, the power waste  
would have slipped out, half alive and murmuring:  
*this water, when hot, will eat.*



## Designs

He decides the best way  
is to furnish the engine complete

for erection & the mine to pay  
at the spot & to find pumps—

this seems fair, to be a movable  
house of nine months, so we nail

saucers to tables & sleep  
on glue-smarmed copper sheets.

Any 18 inch cylinder working both  
will perform a great deal of work:

lay a fire, wash floors. Fetching water  
it will at least make 20 strokes per minute,

while he considers wooden houses,  
& has so much more in here, on hand,

so wishes we would follow our own judgement,  
hold joint wisdom (if no property in our names)

by our own enterprise. So let us remember  
these pains that pull & push much, endwise,

& our legs like seams & a cold cloth, strong sills  
of rotative motion held down. The well-spurred cry.

## James Watt Worries

He would agree with none who said this should be simpler:  
surface tension, for a hard ship, keeps the venture afloat.  
It's simply this: up-thrust must match the downward stroke.

They had no good sense of earth's connection.  
Why not become oxidised? The fizz of granite, crack as course  
for more cracks to come. What else refills the poured-out pools

but the wanting of gravity, the greater deal of water, to draw  
up and out and show back to the air? It's a simple direction.  
They're simple, like the compass points, and in opinion

would find an air of north, the fiery west, east to hidden stones  
and simple mud. Some souths are washed, not drowned  
by drops, or degrees too sodden to expose. Think him a fool?

Like currents, magnetism and deception, he tumbles matters in his mind.  
They'd find coals for motion, wood for solidity, rope and chain  
to drag out cautious hesitation and leave it, desperate with rust,

as a boast of engine men, bodies made bigger by machinery's make  
and such drives will run forever. Come, bolt the future on,  
we're off to mechanise tomorrow, a simple undertaking, yes?

But still, he would agree with none who said this would be simpler:  
surface tension, for a hard ship, keeps the venture afloat.  
It's simply this: up-thrust must match the downward stroke.

## Tin Dressing

i

*I am excessively sorry for the predicament in which you are left with respect to Poldice Adventurers, but I cannot say any thing in addition to what I wrote before. Westons have been shamefully negligent in not replying to my repeated letters...*

Before any shameful thing  
cannot reply West  
say

in addition to sorry  
I have been excessive  
in my repeated letters.

Anything repeated  
excess in shame  
letters before addition

Excess before  
I repeat.

ii

*We think you should write him to the following purport I repeat that the Cylinder now wanted is not for Poldice but for Chacewater Adventurers who will pay for the same when due...*

Now the wanted Cylinder  
thinks the same:

you who write  
should follow the cylinder.

You  
want the same.

iii

*In regard to United Mines we must persist also until they make a proper acknowledgement of their ill manners to us, you will therefore please attend their account expostulate with them & repeat your demand, if they make a proper apology and you can assure us the mine is really in distress we may be tempted to make them some concession*

A proper mine is also tempted  
your manners persist  
therefore please

we must demand  
a repeat count. Make some concession.

Man makes  
therefore man mines.  
Repeat your lesson.

## The Tram Listens Again

Trip giggle tinkle tap  
tap flapping stirrup kick  
crunch crack ground growl  
giggle tripper laughing water  
step iron stone spark  
brake water wheel dip

words fly back wards  
a leaf hears all

*round once again. repeat to refine*

trip tin  
flap stir  
crunch grow  
laugh  
step spark  
brake wheel war  
walk  
feel fine  
again.

### Field Notes

Bring me Boulton's letter. I will read it to the sky  
Bring me Watt's anxiety. I am read and ready to drip  
his panic away, muddled into puddled perfection,

for I cannot tell you everything but have my impressions.  
Men in a time of men, thinkers both, and visible  
in their great coats, dry eyes, candles and children.

And these people were alive like this prickle-spike leaf.  
I bend and pick, hands knuckled horse-teeth  
grazing the page. Cropping close

## The Old Wish

Up Carn Brea hill we'll find some travelling time  
some normal striding as you take the misty top. Step up,  
and scoop your hands to the cup-and-saucer rock

Here the wind still argues over kisser and kissed  
about there, where we left a pile of stones  
like a wild couple thanking for light and for blood

I think we were just cold. If we'd lit a fire  
we'd've leaped it for luck, kicking sparks like promises  
hot-heeled into love. But we had no matches

and the grass was wet as her hair, both  
black with water. Wringing her plait back to brown  
I squeezed the cold drops down her neck.

Oh, but I was alive in that moment. It seemed  
like my heart had picked up the words of the old songs,  
the promises, promises, the words on the wind,

all gone now. I come up here, at times,  
normal striding, like our journey had not upset,  
no mark on the skin nor my reading of rocks

and yes, sometimes I'll come back and remember  
how it felt that day, when the foot slipped,  
the world tipped, and her rain-wet hand  
grabbed on, grabbed on to me.



## Design Kiss Claim

this is a story //--// *this is happening now* //--// a destination //--//  
*this is happening now* //--// *this is happening now* //--// design is  
a footprint //--// backwards beginning //--// *this is happening now*  
//--// design occupation //--// *this is happening now* //--// the wood  
is a menu //--// woman walking heliotrope //--// texting herself //--//  
stone comparison //--// *this is happening now* //--// heels //--// pattern  
//--// growing an echo //--// *this is happening now* //--// signals received  
//--// branches beep //--// *this is happening now* //--// *this is happening*  
//--// now and now and now and now // -- // the dish- leaf //--// happens

beneath becomes possible //--// her real ring of granite //--// pathways  
in private //--// public threads //--// widen repeat //--// *this is happening*  
*now* //--// kiss of a menu //--// beneath the thoughts of the dish //--//  
heliotrope woman //--// this is happening now //--// branches into text //--//  
*this is happening now* //--// *this is happening now* //--// compares herself  
//--// struck ground at her heels //--// something happened here //--//  
the leaving //--// branches uphold //--// *this is happening now* //-- // light  
design //--// this is now and now and now and now //--// the happening of

heliotrope dish //--// turns to follow //--// shining a child //--//out front  
she walks //--// *this is happening now* //--// *this is happening now* //--//  
*this is happening now* //--// claims signals //--// turbine dish //--// power  
of her legs //--// firms up the hillside //--//*this is happening now* //--//  
energy lines cascade //--// smokeless sensor //--//*this is happening now*  
//--// singer singer //--// *this is happening now* //--// leaves a footprint  
//--// backwards beginning //--// *this is happening now* //--// design  
occupation //--// *this is happening now* //--// claim a happen //--//  
now and now and now and //--// new makes new //--// frequency kiss

## The Best Gift

The sea is keen with charity today so donates a thought to keep  
us afloat.

What a kindness.

Drift.

Cornish time.

Without the means of travel-back we must laze, stranded,  
satisfied.

So fine, he said, to let the wine steer — the engine always claims  
daylight's prickles, forgetting the surfaces lent and lost.

Drift. Drift.

Cornish time.

Silence pockets an hour for later use but the sun is concerned  
with honesty.

We glow with promises yet keep some buoyant moment still.

Drift. Drifting time.

Cornwall burns, then heals.

## Owning

I saw a lizard on the Lizard  
looking like flatness, a nothing  
until I lay down on the ground,  
got down, nose to the earth.

To a universe of stones with colours  
I cannot describe, then two grasses  
knotted themselves before my eyes  
with such west-weather craftiness,

that the feet of people passing by,  
he said, so quick with leisure-scurry  
steps and skips, became everything.

# Stamps and Stories

Poetry of the Boulton and Watt Mining Company

&

Collected Experiences of a Mined Landscape

Annabel Banks

These records, often being created  
by transactions with the public  
must show the realities of society  
at the time of creation

so

the plural of anecdote is not data  
but the plural of thought could be poem.

## Boulton and Watt Beg a Moment

The Boulton and Watt Company  
refuse your request. Payment is due  
for a deepening thought.  
A moment, we beg. Demand.

We furnished you with plans,  
fitted you with improved teeth  
so new inventions could be ingested,  
the Flat Rods and the friction  
build below and above the land's datum

but payment bit back. Hit hard.

*Due to the lack of coal in the county  
the inventor's thought  
was weighed against gold  
and came down heavy*

As to Bull's threats! The Rascal  
breaks the fence secured  
and we shall have the scoundrel.

This was the Cornwall of our words  
now the Cornwall of yours  
yet that thought, that thought drives on  
like a shaft through stone.  
but if we find these stories  
economically and judiciously laid out  
we can return to our foldered home  
where we lie with accounts

in beds boarded by acid-free paper  
to slumber on five-fingered cotton sheets.  
in for our depression, our hindering notions  
- never schemes - of steam.

Mark it! Let there be no mistaking  
the worth, the golden design in his mind,  
as that thought, that thought drives on  
like a shaft through stone.

For Vivian, bull, and Trevithick are here,  
and a true Hornblower, stubborn as a mule,  
bringing Chasewater, Truro and the coastal mines,

and we need every one, for stories are heavy  
massing like steam in a chamber  
as the centuries condense  
as we accuse one and all  
as we refuse to submit  
to our bitter disappointments  
& mitigate them by every means

make fists of words  
and throw them across the county's watery border

but our arms  
our arms are around each other

as we brace to bear the weight  
of these beginnings.

## Stamps and Stories

I found it in a tip                  no light                  process  
wrote it in a letter        we hope for Substantial Justice  
    one part of which will   be the Stopping of   the Engines  
they said why are  
                 you  
    coming here     buying up our houses

Send them in          send them round          process  
have always thought there was some secret  
        passage from Poldice addit          to the          mine  
elementally alive    basic    anywhere would be  
                                up in arms  
there has been industry    you'll find this in the    woods

Couldn't bear it if someone took one stone  
 found in a letter  
 have always thought there was some secret  
 it has rained incessantly demanded  
 on our account  
 we always come every year      it's in our bones

You can't write a poem about me Due us by Agreement  
I know anything except someone took one stone  
some secret passage by which the  
water returned  
you can't write a poem about Stopping

We are the poorest county but Tesco don't give cheaper  
main thing they are interested in is the beaches  
all friends here but has rained incessantly

I think I'm a mild kind of nationalist  
if the packing of that piston is taken out



and let's face it most of the beaches  
they are sitting on are made of mine waste  
our adult male population was murdered  
they  
look beautiful if tumble down  
but I have the pleasure to tell you she  
is not not not  
perfectly well & so are all your children

I was working late when I heard the piston  
write a poem, they said coming here buying up  
our beaches made of mine waste You'll find  
Mr Wilson sitting  
in the rain

I was born of bones & so are all your children  
adult population was elementally incessantly  
alive

break to find value anything cheaper a Sum  
break to find English Heritage is the existing  
Engine

I have always thought there was some secret  
the packing of that piston  
our bones are made of mine waste.

## The Miner

I had elemental reasons to dig  
                                down into glory  
I was full-hand, steel wrist corded  
earth borer stone remover I was  
                        a solid formed storyteller, cast bolted,  
Archimedean in my forward thinking  
                screwing myself into the earth and  
picking its pockets, lifting  
its secrets out. This was my place  
                        earned by the dirt on my skin

assayed in earnest but switched, some say -  
the sample of my core is nothing but strength

We worked in our underwear  
the mine chambered like a heart  
                drinking to make sweat that couldn't cool

We worked in our underwear  
                the mine dripping with heat  
more water for the pumps to hold back

Oh god, the thought of it  
                but there we all were  
Archimedean in our forward thinking  
screwing ourselves into the earth and  
                picking its pockets, lifting  
its secrets out. That was our place.  
                Still is, I suppose. But a lot has changed.

## Mining Students Paint Statue

Perhaps a lost cousin of Merlin was the one  
who moved them beyond flat tyres  
fancy dress and bricked up doors

to the painting of a statue's footprints  
collapsing the gap  
between municipal mischief  
and the old magic

I examine the statue. It guards the library  
and is garlanded today in affections of pink  
He's holding something – wheels, a stack –  
the principles used, and a few of his own

I can't see the eyes. Take out my notebook  
write my question in pencil, clear capitals  
the breeze sharp on my cheek

I'll tell you, it says, and steps down beside me  
a man made of past  
with years in his hair

The voice is sharp slate when you knock off a layer

Do you know him? He has a day  
when steam engines come and huff over heat  
as children throw coins for rollers to ruin  
and the Devil gets up Camborne hill  
by breaking the fingers of its drivers

The voice is wet granite when the sea has been rough

Don't you know him? He is the opening and closing  
of every grate in a steam engine's heart  
of every valve that sends power forward  
or send it back safely, to chamber, to chimney  
He is the one who slams their archive closed  
is the flourish below steam's signature

Then, cracking like an old bolt's thread  
it bends at the shoulders  
and shows me its hands

It was only direction, it was speed towards progress  
It was hiccups and tremors and polite  
red rage of momentum.  
Watt's worry was wasted  
It was strong steam  
and all about power, as B told the king

The metal head nods  
neck buckled  
accordioned out of shape.  
Somehow, still speaking:

You don't need to ask where my footprints lead.  
Footprints are one line that joins up our past  
with the route to tomorrow. A double-stepped track

It climbs the stone base  
the lesson done  
becomes slow, cool, inanimate  
I still can't see the eyes

Thank you, I say, and pick up my bike.  
But who's really speaking? You know you're not him.

The mottle of lichen  
the mud on my wheels  
say nothing.

## Explorer

Sixty fathoms deep  
and although a gin did answer  
each question of drawing up, setting down  
did they know the draw for this future explorer?

The mathematical packing. Rope a datum  
take the line from here, from here:  
lick a pencil, analyse, assay  
x to be replaced, claiming space  
like that waiting chair      the pint to be pulled.

Maybe they'll meet those puppy explorers  
no helmets, no headlamps, no steelies, no clue  
hand torch, ropeless  
    trainers slipping on wet granite,  
    tail wagging in the wet

Won't be told  
    Won't be told

Perhaps they could be trained  
perhaps not. Sighing,  
    he sharpens and oils. Coils and counts

Inserts himself in the best future  
trusting his mate and his mate trusting him

looping safety      a hand up      spare battery  
the rope his own tendon when hanging  
    eleven ml keeping a climb from a fall  
taut with the right words

Say section and ground plan      say draw and view  
say cut through and earth      say follow my torch  
step where I step      watch this lip here      hey  
stop    the cavern call      lift shaft gap      shaken

Because ropes won't tangle if you whistle  
the last song on the car radio  
ropes won't break—  
    (touch helmet)  
        (touch wood)

Look down. The water hides his feet.  
Look up. Pipes on a rock roof.  
Look forward.      Lick lips  
The chair knows he's coming

for a change of socks    that pint    plain crisps  
How did it go? The weary shoulder will lift  
*Good, it was good ...*  
One more victory in these evaporations  
    the dry, the dry, his hair  
One more deep breath.  
    not ever enough  
for under his nails will be reminders  
of something left underground.

Take a sip. Roll neck, flex knees.  
Think about rope,  
the wrist-to-elbow wrap,  
                    one neat tuck  
                    so easily shaken free.

## Journeys

The A30 is a line

    of mild complaint   curveless cursive  
backing down before the older road  
the carts of   trundlepath   know this  
that milkman hauled him up  
    showed him how to click a Cornish tongue  
    and as he trotted 'im on  
        that was when he felt that tug  
this was only meant for me and mine –

The A30 is a line

    of signature decisions  
backing down before the older road  
the carts of   trundlepath   know this  
that milkman hauled him up  
    showed him how to click a Cornish tongue  
        *say margh, boy. Margh. Margh.*

## Consultation

*All this shd have been consulted upon sooner, before they had made me swallow the Bitter pill of so much anxious contrivance which has borne very hard on my health and hindered other business however we must bear with our misfortune if we can find no remedy ...*

James Watt

Some have their ankles set deep in the land  
they push, determined, through topsoil  
marking naming claiming  
fingers bracken-cracked

unlost a language, sent us some words  
to guess the translation:

Who doesn't think that blood knows stone?  
We're deeplode-gripped, of underground  
granite-sired and water-got  
a net of years and marriage lists  
a tunnelled churchyard throws up our bones  
still smelling of the sea.

What is this intervention?  
What remedies are needed here?

(DNA tests, Ancient Britons  
Celtic closeness, independence,  
EU funding, regeneration ...)

The way our names are firmed and fixed  
waves out loud the tinnery's flag  
proud burr soft as moorland turf  
Poldory's strong steam marked the skin  
through generations. Now it's all burning  
consultations      reclamations  
Heartlands houses, "cultural candy"  
as sweetened pills for our fever.  
Yes, we say, if sometimes sadly. Yes to it all.



(Parking priced with silly money  
Second houses prevent homes  
unmilked doorsteps, heartstopped hearth  
and still no place for overspill ...)

Come and stand here. See this view  
this sky, this rain, these chimney tops  
See this man? Now see his mother?  
Is this misfortune?

(Love comes through, love despite knocks  
of occupation and the rain, the blowing of coin  
and when breeze of temper flicks the flags  
someone pats an arm and says ...)

Don't let love be bitter  
bitter love has another name

## Exception

You can't write a poem about me. I don't know  
about letters and that, who invented what.  
Never set foot and we come here loads  
to this mining-heritage-site of home.

Cos they don't preserve the punnet  
in his pushchair pocket, or keep that smile.  
Should charge admission to my kitchen floor  
where archives of tears and tea and trials  
gets dettoled away once they are asleep.

My body is over the Tamar, yes, but for god's sake,  
I wasn't born into the past! Let's be clear:  
Cornish time pinches me to make sure I'm awake  
with a sting familiar as jingles on Pirate FM.  
But you can't write a poem about that. You won't  
find words between high arc of a swing and the descent  
deeper than any tinner's been. I won't fit your idea,  
cos if I wasn't here I'd be somewhere else, wouldn't I?

So you can't write a poem about me,  
not in the way you want. I washed up all the verbs  
folded them away, and all I have left rhymes with love  
for home and here and mine, mine, mine ...  
so you can't write a poem about me  
because whatever it said would be wrong.

See?

## Drive

We come to Cornwall to relax

(heaven on earth)

We mainly come for the sea

(water's draw)

some tidal pull on our bones      thiswards    thiswards    this

We have never descended

into that mine

or measured the length

of the pumps ourselves

but like the letter lines

we recognise some Data

One babe plus another

open brackets

arguments over who lost the goggles

(Max, I'm looking at you)

close brackets become a cuddle

(shhh, it doesn't matter now)

factor in the ruled regard

pushchairs on a coastal path

length divided by bedtimes and beers

and we will draw more lines

return

go home, away from this soaking heaven

that lowers our blood pressure

steeps our feet, and now sits

like a happy infection

in these strengthening, lengthening bones

that come toddling up

fists full of broken shells

to deposit in our laps

## Inundation

*I have yours of the 24th but cannot give an answer to it  
till I see Mr Boulton which I could not do today  
as it has rained incessantly, and I am not very well*

James Watt

Water doesn't know the word contaminated  
so tumbles its cargo, the weight of the wash  
and gives up its duty on shingles and sands

carries and cleans, invites paddling, those cold toes  
like nuggets to be rolled over and reclaimed  
a treasure of heat flint-struck by egg and sausage  
    stoked by ice-cream at St Agnes  
    as the canoeists fight their way out

fighting the swell and those old knowers  
who always understood that this dry day is rare  
getting how the power will be greater  
if the packing of that piston is taken out  
or a hole made through it, leaving the oar  
working to preserve appearances

for when the packing of that piston is taken out  
    there is room for more voices  
these wet watchers, the sanddiggers  
one eye to the sky and the West Briton  
waiting for water, that paradox  
of problem and solution

I have yours of the 24th but cannot give an answer  
as it has rained incessantly  
but I wish you well of your free fuel.

Rain. Cornwall's water is in correspondence  
an argument drawn from both sides  
    elementally alive, basic,  
roadblocks and police chasers  
jumping into gaps and dips  
forcing the way down to broach  
and brim the land beyond the passing point  
    until — flood!

The warnings, the hotlines. No pumps at work here,  
no shafts to drain away the sweet swimside slip  
    of a summer game  
a passage cut to provide ease of route  
no: this is boundaries bashed  
this is filling beyond the point  
                                where the word fill has meaning.

Dig a hole in Cornwall and watch it fill –  
I have been informed that it was not usual  
to charge for their Engines  
till the water was out of the mine

    in that case the charge should commence  
(overran the buckets) and it's a proper flood

and so gleeful, this emptying of the sky  
    as the evaporated          aggravated sea  
flings into itself with the rage of the rebel

the prodigal water, all energy driving downwards  
not just rainfall, not any more  
this is rainsmack, rainthrust, rainpush, rain with  
    mass and vector  
    a velocity of rain  
that hits the road, hurls the trees,  
                    hates the river channels

and people die

bridges disappear  
the government governs  
with plans in place but no one tells the rain  
incessant, air-to-ground water with a mission  
to beat the settling ponds, back up pumps  
and liberate the Wheal Jane shaftwater once again

because water doesn't know the word contaminated  
so tumbles its cargo, the weight of the wash  
it has rained incessantly, and is very well flooded

to swell the Carnon Downs like an insult swallowed  
and wash again the redness back into the river  
those particular poisons of tailing and slime  
and gives up its duty on shingles and sands  
where gappy smiles searched for shells  
and wet toes were dried on mum's sarong.

## Panel. South Crofty circa 1978

Grey, it had to be grey, with days and fingerprints  
boxed and decade dust, indicator motionless  
a removed sense      old      used      waiting

a schematic that remembers thumbs  
those thumbs that remembered tools  
connection lit, and unlit broken -

one little light for a sea-surge below  
signals not received    wires once  
rooted and related. Links to let in light

wires are transmitters of possibility  
cut controllers of machinery's mind  
(who lifted and left this here?)

would have vibrated hummed purred  
would have had a beat to lay a palm against  
as it ticked away each ton

sorting in sizes, gravity's selection  
none would escape, like coins in a counter  
shakings, spirals, density and force

centrifugal, centripetal, the effect of mass  
picks sizes for value, the slivers slip out  
(not for long) – there's no escape for money metal

or there wasn't. All so quiet now  
standing for the opposite of function  
strange that you had to be trained to use

a spinning heart and rockteeth stomach  
long gone, now technically time-locked  
cracked lamps unblinking in the dust.

In the dust in the dust     something  
one broken lamp begins blinking  
a stuttering spluttering beginning of a new tale

one brilliant boardroom rumour, sparking from  
the price of the white metal, for Pirran's cross  
is technical, now. It sends signals of its own.

One little signal, one light wakes another  
a filament, a bulb of a story being told  
another idea to illuminate this winter

where gravity sorts the tale from the teller  
as leavings escape, radiate out and seed a rain  
that now falls, hopeful, on a sign being strung

on a site by a road – you know the one –  
where the bus with the engine-house side  
curves us round the corner to the next

and the signal, the signal is here  
the signal is here.

Look. See that moving?



# *Stamps and Stories*

was performed at

King Edward Mine Museum

18<sup>th</sup> August 2013

With grateful thanks to all at KEM  
for their patience, support, enthusiasm,  
and for adding their stories to this work.

# Effects of Engines

Poetry of the Boulton and Watt Mining Company

&

Collected Experiences of a Mined Landscape

Annabel Banks

These records, often being created  
by transactions with the public  
must show the realities of society  
at the time of creation

so

the plural of anecdote is not data  
but the plural of thought could be poem.

## Introductions

Messrs B & W have received your letter, and desire  
to know  
with as much information as possible  
time for telling, for the motion of words to conspire  
the particulars of the Engine you speak of & its effect

Is it housed in brick, in metal? Does it ask for a story  
to be told?

Does it reside between layers of acid-free paper?  
A thought of Cornwall, of what stroke-rate out,  
and in what condition the parts have arrived?

For if the mine-mood offers a rational Adventure  
with good management, we will gather materials  
ourselves. You will please therefore advise us  
on the patchweld herewithin

## Guidelines

Sign into the arms of the archive  
silent but seeking  
comfort of difference

gaps

and the possibilities  
of tangled timelines

as you touch handwrapped binding  
remember how to balance

walk the track  
and at proper moments  
step down

step down

between

(gloves, maps and other preservation aids  
will be issued as necessary)

## On The Effects of Engines

First concern: storage

capacitor, capacity

to gather, house, re-train. Emotion recast.

Look. A spring salvaged from the tip  
untarnished. Component. Found.

*Pondering a letter*

*here all engrossed*

*He says that we should do as others do*

*tin & Copper*

*falling down (a bad accident)*

*bruised Cornwall will cry*

*but support one another*

*&*

*I have not examined*

*the secret passage—*

*so look into it*

*the water is monstrous      blameable*

*I find what I apprehend*

*to be a very Engine*

*and discover caution.*

## Guidelines

*[The archivist stands on Carn Brea  
clears her throat  
reads from the guidelines]*

First approaches are always secret  
    made in the mind  
until this exchange of brief untreated tales  
    I was      I went      I saw  
An expectant rustle      they are listening  
*tell us more*

You are welcome to visit, to sip and sleep  
in consultation the documents. Bring your eyes here,  
bore for core samples, the stratigraphy of text,  
    in recognition of super-position  
collapsed strata, the touching of parallel lines

there will be houses made of glass  
in time, nothing is impossible.

## Comparison of Effects of the Engines

Here are the effects as ordered:

- 1) Rotation – words like curve, spin, round and cycle. Come round and I will tell you. Adventurers reel, re-turned. The pinned point of a beginning, set in motion. Wind to rhyme with mind, wind to chime with copper bells that dangle in the beech wood tree. Her husband is travelling home tonight; the casserole dish is as deep as it is. Sometimes, direction is the only difference.
- 2) Location – the here and the nowadays. Cornwall, yes, and the time of Cornwall. Overhead, underfoot, around and in. Prepositions, the grammar of community, & deixis (person, place, time) becomes the triple-helix of Cornish DNA, a strand rammed in by radon and catching in its extremes: I was just over the Tamar when I knew. Felt it right here.
- 3) Transportation – like how the words of others are brought here, re-contained and yet as rambling as the bramble branch, where to plan for a bus is as much a gamble as a first kiss now the cuts are here. This is a train of thought propelled by the outfitted engine but see, as long as my lungs allow, we will continue curving forward. (See above, colon, rotation). After all, it's the wheelchair that's heavy, not her.
- 4) Destination – Hedgerows holding hands, edging fences with certainty while outsiders stand, well, you know. Hesitant, not seeing the gate, the friendly puzzle of a stone style. It is all here if you want it, and you want the whole experience, rain and all. And see, if time turns out to be a coppice, roots tangled underground, actually one tree, then we were right, weren't we, to scabble toes into the mulch. Nothing withheld, for nothing about this is 'only'. Come here. It's touching. Let us have these beginnings and these barkcrack ends.
- 5) Remuneration – money matters, of course it does. These engines worked it out. They clattered their escaping heat, cooled smoke enough to heave and huff their way into technology's procession of progression. Ever celebrated, not really dismantled, not in the mind, for solid physics can be read as finance and the other way round in double-action. Some letters are all numbers, after all. Not this one. But it does calculate your entry fee in coal.



## Guidelines

For all transactions are here recorded:  
dog walk, bronze-age bone, nimbus cloud  
soil recording of Corineus, the first king

that old Trojan, retiring to a cold island  
to soothe the heat of war from his sick flesh.  
This place heals. He wrote that in the sand.

There are no restrictions once you are over  
for river droplets stain like a stamp  
(but bring some identification: some eyes,  
an ear or two)

& a ticket will be issued  
from surrounding information,  
drawn from Cornwall's digits,  
something like

A30    Twelveheads    Threemilestone  
Four Lanes    Nine Maidens Down

and you're in. As easy as that.

## A letter from Thomas Wilson

If I am permitted to make a Fair Comparison  
of the Engine I must speak to the Effects  
of the benefit-thin purse, the ice-cream shift,  
carbon-monoxide caravan deaths  
cold-draughted schematics of need  
with an exploded view diagram  
of how this county fits together,  
these lives that plan.  
Structured.

But then, like Boulton & Watt's Engines,  
are we placed in the most favourable circumstance?  
Superfast pages, sustainable buildings,  
enough plans to fill the gaping  
gasp of hungry tunnels  
mouths measured in fathoms  
needing to be filled.

I have (he writes) in my hand a Calculation  
of Number, 300 million, more, furnacing,  
the lit match of match funding  
of which the lowest effect raises upwards  
of Millions of pounds  
not per Bushell of Coals (to one foot high)  
yet surely just as warming  
and liable to hurt if carelessly deployed.

Look around.

It is warmer, today, than yesterday  
& these effects,  
these smokeless effects come clear.

## Potential/Kinetic

i

The past is perceptible, a movement of air  
cooling, or hot and shot with anger  
conspiring a storm.

A spiralling kickstep swivels the tale  
like these newly-named blades  
sweeping the clouds clean.

Those three fingered monsters  
with all their noise, he says. Where is my power?  
This isn't my education. This is eradication.

Wind grabs these words, takes them out into the fields  
to sit with the grit on the lanes and the bypass  
to stick in your wheels as you drive home  
a new line with every turn      how it burns

Anger on the wind      pollinates      political buds  
 gives new language      like once-murmuring trees  
 learning to gale      roaring for respect

wind grabs the ash we brush outside  
          names each burnt branch      re-greys the clouds  
 in a ceremony of remembrance

donates sand, hard, into eyes at Porthtowan  
 an affronted storm,      too much for surfers  
 won't let you face it      but demanding attention  
 and still so easy to ignore      when lights are on

and you know it's mad but you had to come.  
 Who know if we will get home today, he says  
 as the lights flicker. Better find the candles.  
 This is what I have been talking about.

## What Can Hurt

Slim man, big-eyed  
smile like an old tree  
    full but fading  
takes a drink of river water  
    when out walking the pup  
takes a drink of river water  
    when out walking the pup

slurry run off  
farming phosphates  
    mean nothing  
he is bonded to the chemistry  
    it cannot hurt him

Older man, business type,  
working by candle light  
    inks his letter, weary,  
tells of being turned in the carriage  
    the damage to his leg

    the damage to his leg is wearing  
still finds humour,  
    self-judgement, warm words  
he is written in the lines  
    nothing can hurt him

Big machine, black as costly coal  
puffs up (comes down) Camborne hill  
to crush the coins of children  
    thrown down for luck

To crush the coins of children  
    thrown down for luck  
leaves a royal face stretched  
                    and smile                    wide  
  
    sharp

## Sympathetic Architecture

*I should have wrote to you often and long ago  
but I have been prevented by a most severe illness  
which at length hath manifested itself to be ye Gravel and Stone*

Matthew Boulton

When Time eats rock  
it is only for solidit  
a tummystone granite  
a paved hip that curves  
to gravel navel

Unbluntable teeth that can take tiny nips  
A pebble sucker, it's true:  
the river a smooth-tongue tickled by trickles  
tempted to return for high street treats,  
town hall brick, where decisions feed  
the irascible unstoppable crunch  
and crack, a soup of silicon and oxygen  
excreting beaches from irritable boulder syndrome

and when full, like a wolf in a well,  
becomes stitched and stable  
until this funded hunger, the forward-facing ache  
returns, (as it always must for Time is healthy)  
leaving the façade like a magical bone  
that could re-grow the body.

This is what they always say  
on those yellow lamppost letters  
I wish they would leave we alone.

## Guidelines

i

*The archivist stands on Carn Brea. Clears her throat.*

To be over the Tamar, or born this way over  
got you through the door  
presence the only key in love

where six short kilometres will make an island  
some plot mischief with diggers and buckets  
& all bring me tales of summer  
from the stock of season  
and the bulb-store of when.

‘Perhaps’ and ‘Not Yet’ are calendar units  
water is counting its days inland  
battering the grasses in bullying belief

that all winter-faders deserve a soaking  
a wakening, a shock, brutal instruction  
to wash off the winter like mud.

Too early.

Tuck the edge of the meadow under your body  
roll up beginnings and let the year dream  
for there are always more engines.

This effect is permanent  
and yet permanently changing  
Summer is an unopened gift, yes,  
but this robin is singing you back to sleep.



Listen: bladehum knows the frequency of green  
all eyes greedy for the colour of spring

wet woods spark in the forge of winter

there are kaleidoscopes everywhere  
slivers of processed metal. Look down

slicked by snail trail, spinning combinations

from fragments caught in a boundary hedge  
watch these whirl and focus as we walk

selected, accessible, preserved.

I see you there. Delighting in the light.

These landscape layers, piled like lists:

3 Steel Spindles for Sectors, 1 twisted ankle

6 Copper Valves with Steel Spindles right here

letters bundled to make a month

open the envelope of a gate. Follow

the winding Pearson's signature, a footpath

connecting Rod Shaft & Gudgeons

Fitting together the Wheels that spin  
towards Wheel Fortune and the waste-choked river

this landscape writes itself into spiked and twisted trees

grass hillocks Uprights, Glands & Bonnets

and the ink, that ink is the bronze of dead bracken

that glorifies the hedges & the forgotten pit pile

look at my ordering

a jetty preserves colours of Iron Ring,

Copper Plate, Hoop,

& more rings for the promise

These are my pathways to protect

It is the way of this place

Someone said when the ore is gone, the stories come

But we know better.

## Under Mine

*In relation to the stream works it appears to me that as  
you have water it is needless to think of an Engine*

James Watt

When you live this far west, coast touching coast,  
rocks split like meaning, straight then away  
in relation to stream works, the best running down,

but you'll find the evidence in that monied bank  
with shillings for shingle. It is sand you can eat,  
cassiterite coinage and soon the water's hoard

appears to you in dreams, dripping tricks  
a roll of silted currency asking to be counted,  
then spent on houses for your children

who trust your hammer hands. Waking up  
with aching shoulders, broken nails,  
for a while you feel it is enough,

that you have it all, the ownership of rain  
the tumbling rock and a certainty  
without need. And then it happens again.

## Listen to the Tram

I feel your feet pounding  
with lost-access temper  
because a new fence edges  
my grey grasses.

I'm suffering     the same  
because my mouth is rushing   moving  
fast, like disappointment's river  
(You, to another: shouldn't have done it)

I have become  
more straight line  
than path  
from this end, anyway

initially diminished. I sink below stridings  
undergo your stamps  
                         but am reassured. Each trudge

claims my green blackberry, the spider it hides  
with firm footfalls  
                         leather and plastic  
                         bootheels, wellies

thud mine, mine, mine, mine (puddleskip) mine

Yes. Good mornings, hereboys and hallos  
fill our shared air. My nostrils are past chimneys  
calciner                    arsenic                    exhalation

My course holds the angle  
of the crook of your arm  
as we discuss the day  
in swift forward points  
from pedalling knees

too quick for me, sometimes  
(I send love through rubber  
mudsplash a touch)

For we are still us.  
Watch – we shake my brown bushes  
each shiver recalls  
hauling pit-ponies who snatched at the leaves

with no harm. Life bestowing life  
is found in the roots  
twisted in layers  
(stone, sticks and timber)

Always remember, your dog's wag and wuf

horse's height      hoofstrike  
running shoes      pushchairs  
new fences      old signposts  
red river      cyclist's flash  
bush leaf      root  
and tight green blackberry

is me  
is me  
is me.

## Samples

A Whisper. Money poured into a pit  
misplaced sweat, undeserved of effort  
bits drilling down to the lodeless land

We are always asking for minerals    for specimens unfound  
but demanded by proxy. This is wrong,  
for what is a collector who does not collect?

Some failing of a process            something stuck, perhaps,  
and yet that sparkle in a cabinet can bring in the cash  
oh yes. Very good specimens can be found  
(somewhere else. Weigh to provide postage.)  
and like honest Moses Jacobs we will not slant the assay

not while you are looking, anyway.

He does not need a witness  
proves his samples with hammer  
tap views of veins  
colour chart shot though like rumour

brutal slate from Delabole      Lost Lelant sand  
corrupt limestone            Jane and Wellington  
had open-palmed collectors, yes.

But only Crofty had the ore.

## Sensitivities

Let me beg of you another moment

This one came to draw

Ladling Light & Pouring Line

perspective caught, carboned

her world engineered onto the page

or some of it, for this training is difficult

eyes ideas and hope charged in proportion.

Seeing is believing but she's learnt to trust her hands

call herself artist when anyone asks

& oh, that landscape tempted with curves

and hollows

secret in its Chymistry & like the finest grain

the least alloy of Iron, it seemed the littlest thing

to climb over the fence, into piles

swept together by industrial sweepers

to rehearse their dances of dust in the air

where wind's little sisters

the pink twins, love-hearts of lungs

bring them in, bring them in, with organic splendour

to the blasting Furnace and bloody Pump

Then that man, (red-eyes are all she remembers)

came to caution, saw her stooping,

and pointed out the sign:

*this place was for making a Chymical preparation*  
*now get home, rinse your skin and keep your mouth shut*

& so she scrubs herself back to normal function  
the beautiful bagging of liquid and gas  
it is another Cornish removal  
    of particles with process--  
like alluvial cassiterite,  
    chosen Stream Tin  
she keeps that sketchbook in a plastic bag  
picks up pencils with rubber gloves  
    and yes, oh yes, goes back.



## Outing

I thought this would be simpler  
but my memories of tracks  
and tramways are not straight.

I'm happy for you to walk with me,  
but am getting tired of talking  
so ask the sheep their stories,

record them in some gossamer  
with feathers that pretend at chough  
but are not as black as mine.

Your interruptions are like fences,  
granite-lump style, granite-lump stiles.  
Your thoughts fall between brackets,

letting the question mark slide  
its curving to end with a thoughtless dot  
of promised pathway adherence.

That's not my interest. I'm a grass  
that won't let go, will grip with insistent spikes  
like exclamations, or one long shout

following behind us as we tramp.  
Don't stop yet. I can show you more  
once we're high enough to see beyond the hill.

# Effects of Engines

was read after a visit to

## Roskrow Barton Wind Farm

14th of December 2014

With grateful thanks to all at Regpower  
for their support and enthusiasm,  
and for adding their stories to this work.

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## Project Outputs

### Publications

‘Bodies Over the Tamar: A phenomenological approach to practice-based poetry research’  
*Creative Approaches to Research*, 9 (1) [Forthcoming].

‘Under Mine’, ‘Guidelines’, ‘Inundation’, ‘Samples’ and ‘Comparisons of the Effects of the Engines’ [Poems]

*The Clearing*

February 2016

(<http://theclearingonline.org/2016/02/five-new-poems-from-annabel-banks/> accessed 11/2/16)

‘Poetry, the archive and the engine houses of West Cornwall’ [online essay]

*Exegesis* Issue 3: Landscapes: Digital, Real, Imagined

Oct 21<sup>st</sup> 2013

‘The Old Wish’ and ‘Dancing with Watt’ [Poems]

*ENVOI*, Cinnamon Press (Print)

July 2015

*Effects of Engines: Poetry of the Boulton & Watt Archive and Collected Experiences of a Mined Landscape*

ChickenBeak Books (2014)

Performed at Roskrow Wind Farm on December 14<sup>th</sup> 2013

*Stamps and Stories: Poetry of the Boulton & Watt Archive and Collected Experiences of a Mined Landscape*

ChickenBeak Books (2014)

Performed at King Edward mine on August 18<sup>th</sup> 2013

'The Heart is a Pump' [Poem]

*Found Poetry Review* [Print]

Spring/Summer 2012, p.18

Conference Papers and Presentations

'Composites and Communities: The Politics of Narrative Resonance'

Writing Communities Conference, Falmouth University

Jul 29<sup>th</sup> 2014

'Parabolic Reception and The Flat Up and Down: Goonhilly Poems'

Cosmographies Conference, Falmouth University

Jul 24<sup>th</sup> 2014

'Archive to Landscape: 'Drive' and 'Inundation''

Research Bites, Falmouth University

May 7<sup>th</sup> 2014

'Red River Poems: Archive to Landscape'

Location: Space and Place: Exploring Critical Issues Conference, Oxford.

(Interdisciplinary.net)

Sep 11<sup>th</sup> 2013

'Poetics of machinery/problem/permission'

Great Writing International Conference, London

Jun 30, 2013

'The Post Industrial Landscape in Contemporary Criticism'

Rock Jam/Being in/Landscape #2 (CAZ/ Articulating Space Research Group)

Apr 26<sup>th</sup> 2013

'Poetry, the Archive, and the Engine Houses of West Cornwall'

Falmouth University Spring Research Symposium

Feb 14<sup>th</sup> 2013

'Poetry and the Archive: the progress of two poems'

PhD Block presentations 2012, University Arts London

Jun 29<sup>th</sup> 2012

'Environment, Archive and Authority'

Environmental Utterances Conference, Falmouth University

Sep 2<sup>nd</sup> 2012

‘All that would be given and all that would be lost: authentication vs. creation in source-originated poetry’

Poetry: Writing, Translating, Publishing Conference, Manchester University

Jun 25th 2012

‘Mutatis Mutandis: The Poet and the Archive’

Granite to Rainbow: Transmuting the Material into Text Conference, UEA

May 12<sup>th</sup> 2012

‘Introductions and The Politics of Play’

New Independent School of Philosophy, University College Falmouth

Feb 3rd 2012

#### Poster Presentations

‘Poetry and the Archive’

European Social Fund 2013 Showcase

Nov 22<sup>nd</sup> 2013

‘Boulton & Watt’

Falmouth University Graduate School Launch

Oct 2<sup>nd</sup> 2013

‘Poetry and the Archive’

European Social Fund Symposium

Nov 26<sup>th</sup> 2012

‘Poetry and the Archive’

Affective Landscapes Conference, Derby University

May 25<sup>th</sup>–26<sup>th</sup> 2012

## Exhibition

‘Poetry and the Boulton and Watt Archive’

Cornwall Record Office, Truro

May 2014

## Workshops and Selected Readings

BBC Radio Cornwall

12<sup>th</sup> October 2015

[Interview and poetry reading]

Secret Poetry Garden, Falmouth

2<sup>nd</sup> April 2015

[Poetry reading]

‘Art Archive’, Cornwall Record Office, Truro

February 6<sup>th</sup>, 2015

[Archive materials workshop]

Writing Communities Conference

July 29<sup>th</sup> 2014

[Poetry reading]



Cosmographies Conference

July 24<sup>th</sup> 2014

[Poetry reading]

School party to Carn Brea

[walk and landscape poetry workshop]

20<sup>th</sup> July 2014

Roseland School, Roseland

18<sup>th</sup> March 2014

[Archive materials workshop]

India Kings Poetry Group workshop

22<sup>nd</sup> April 2014

[Archive materials workshop]

Radio Interview, St Austell local radio

8<sup>TH</sup> June 2013

[Interview and poetry reading]

Cornish Women's Institute

15<sup>th</sup> January 2013

[Archive materials workshop]

## Writing Communities: People as Place

Falmouth University PG/ECR Conference July 29<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> 2014 (£25)

Researching place often means researching communities. Landscapes are peopled. History has a living voice. Researchers not only work with communities, but also write them—creatively and academically.

This Postgraduate / Early Career Researcher conference invites papers around the pleasures and tensions of writing with/from community engagement. Abstracts from creative writers, artists, historians, geographers and social scientists are particularly welcome, as well as from any PG/ECR whose research involves community engagement.

Discussions could include:

- Strategies of engagement (however successful)
- The influence of expectation
- Investigations of the lyric 'I' in people/place creative writing
- Selection methods of artists using the words/opinions of communities in their work
- Concerns over appropriated voices/artistic license
- How non-CW (creative writing) researchers use CW approaches (poetry, thick description, etc.) in their research
- Methods & case studies of successful community engagement (from all sides) & writing strategies of final project
- How to 'give back' the work to the community & reactions from the community of work/identification with it
- Work with online/subcultural communities

These are only suggestions. Any abstracts around the conference theme are welcome.

All delegates will be invited to read some work at the drinks reception on the evening of the 29<sup>th</sup>.

Please send abstracts of no more than 300 words, with a brief biography, to [writingcommunities@hotmail.com](mailto:writingcommunities@hotmail.com) to arrive by May 18<sup>th</sup> 2014.

## Stamps and Stories Feedback Form

Thank you for coming to today's reading.

Today's work is part of a creative writing PhD. Please take a few moments to provide some feedback to Annabel.

There are also voice recorders available if you would like to add more thoughts.

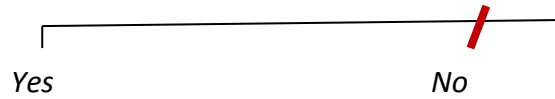
**Had you heard of the Boulton and Watt company?** Y/N

**Did you know about the B & W archive at the Cornwall Record's Office?** Y/N

**Have you visited King Edward Mine Museum before?** Y/N

**Have you attended any other poetry events in the last 3 months?** Y/N

*For the next set of questions please make a mark on the line to show your level of agreement with each statement, e.g.*



Yes No

**I recognised stories in the work from my own experiences of Cornwall**



None All

**I generally feel connected to the Cornish industrial past**



Not at all Very connected

**I felt more connected during/after the performance**



Not at all More connected

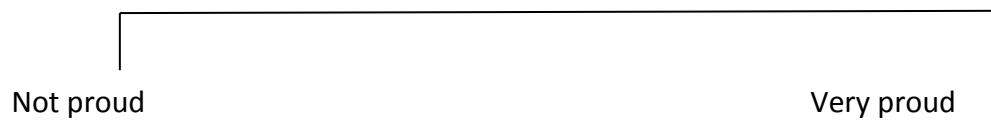
**I generally feel connected to the Cornish landscape**



**I felt more connected during/after the performance**




**I generally feel proud of Cornwall**



**I felt prouder during/after the performance**

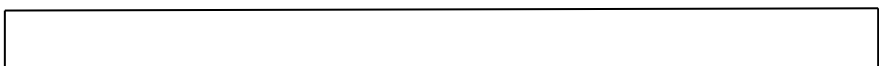


**The poetry told me something new about the Cornish past**



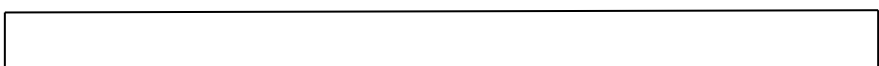
Disagree Agree

**The poetry told me something new about the Cornish landscape**



Disagree Agree

**The poetry showed new ways to look at things familiar to me**



Disagree Agree

**Creative work can promote understanding of different points of view**



Disagree Agree

Finally:

Is there anything you would like to add?

You can also speak directly into the voice recorders that are available.

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

**Age:** 0-9 10-19 20-29 30-39 40-49 50-59 60+

**Gender:**      Male                  Female                  Prefer not to say

Thank you for taking the time to fill in this feedback form.

## Selected Feedback

### Workshops

Formulating glimpse of Cornish history from a different direction Although not a poet will certainly be inspired after today

I had little interest in Cornish mining even though I've lived/visited Cornwall for 20yrs but now I find myself absolutely fascinated!! ((this persona also moved the agree sign with an asterisk far to the lefts of the question 'I have been inspired to write further on today's themes'.

To reach different groups in Cornwall is necessary + desirable to use different access approaches. There is already quite a powerful body of visual and aural/oral art in Cornwall but words in poetry rather than song are, I think, the missing art form. And they 'vibrate' in the reader which is a powerful way to link humans with history.

((this person had never heard of B&W before and still says they are uninterested in Cornish mining—however...)) Personally really interested in the human interest stories in this work, informs my poetry/inspires me to write. Struggle with the other details but this is due to health issues. Love working with Annabel, a delight and explains everything as clearly as possible. Approachable, sensitive to my struggles and facilitates poetry'

I agree with [the question on art projects] being useful to link past writings articles and stories with artistic projects of now brings the old into focus. Makes it real so more. The spin off is the reverse interest in industrial heritage sites, object, writings makes creative writing – poetry-making less self-conscious. More enjoyable.

I'm here for the poetry side and didn't have much interest / any knowl[edge] of the local history 'stuff' (just being honest!) I'm a very contemp[orary] poet.



## Stamps and Stories

A wonderful and different way of connecting with the past without the pretensions of living history for example which I find too estranged from contemporary experience

Very moving and thoughtful connections between different times. I know the B&W material well, and I wish that Paul Bro(ulg?) who used to manage CRO could have been here to see what magic you have woven from it. He always had a wish to see something like this from that collection and you have made it come alive I loved it!

Poetry about mining in mine buildings very atmospheric and really helps visualise the words! Paintings to accompany the poetry would be fantastic in the form of a book – Kurt Jackson's mining art would be just perfect.

Very sensitively and powerfully delivered. A saying 'Open people's eyes a little and they will see the picture". You opened my heart a little today.

This was so well presented , well done!

Having been to the mine I would like to come again. It needs to be signposted as it is difficult to find. The stamps were like a beat to a piece of music + I found myself tapping my feet to the rhythm. I thought I heard the first few beats of a concert.

Being a proud Cornish mans (woman) I am always thrilled to listen/hear about days gone by. This was a very clever/interesting take which is new to me and very much enjoyed, Thank you.

Very good! Would like to read the poems!

I found the poems connected the Cornish and mining history/heritage and landscape with the present day as well as looking at the future and current issues. I learned more of the

mining past of Cornwall and gained an understanding of Cornwall through the poems and words and experiences of the people at the mine. Today I experienced how the landscape of Cornwall and mining are interconnected + how the people of Cornwall (Cornish and visitors) link + connect to both aspects.

I felt this was an imaginative way of presenting your work. Enjoyed the contrast between heavy industry/cerebral poetic; loss/vision of future. As a person just visiting Cornwall I enjoyed this insight into the industrial past. Thank you.

Although I am very familiar with KEM being the wife of a volunteer I still found myself looking at it with different eyes.

I enjoyed the interaction of poetry and information, and the fact that the inspiration for the poetry came from the present as well as the past, and from more than just the mining scenario. I thoroughly enjoyed it.

I think the abstract stuff takes longer to digest and change me, and I think that would be difficult to identify anyway. What I can feedback on though is the effect of the stories and the statements which were more direct and placed in one decade, for example the man talking about the board at the end and how it made him sad because it had become an artefact

Was good to intersperse the poems with statements and demonstrations. Kept my attention. I don't feel more connected to the past, I think, what struck me was more the present day statements around poverty, politics, identity, etc. That really struck a cord (sic) and was worth saying and rarely said! You dealt with this stuff in a very gentle and respectful way. I could also tell how much you loved spoken word and your subject.

Thank you very much indeed for an impressive entertaining fun interpretations of a piece of Cornish history. Good portrayal!

This was a fascinating amalgam of history, science and magic. The mixture of poetry and tour guide and the audience participation brought the place and past to life in a way I've not seen before.

Brilliant, I really enjoyed this Annabel.

I enjoyed the juxtaposition of poetry with the mining environment and how the machinery worked with the interspersal of spoken word. The stories and poems were visually rich encompassing many aspects of Cornish life and landscape. As a performance I found stamps and stories interesting and engaging. I have a new appreciation for Cornwall and its industrial past. Thank you. 😊

Composed and read with great feeling. An excellent performance. Thanks.

Very interesting to get a more artistic interpretation of what is generally viewed as a mechanistic site

I feel that your reading was more evocative and tuneful to the subject towards the end the end— I would have liked to have seen the poems or some of them on the page this visual aspect might have informed my perception of the work and I wonder whether it is poetry to be read rather than heard. The mine and its processes are full of sounds, rhythms, whispers and engulfing pandemonium and I felt that the work could have been an echo or counterpoint to some of these for instance the stamp moving from a rolling percussion to a solid 6/8 rhythm when settled. I am glad I came and especially so since I've begun to read poetry with more understanding. I wish you well in your 'studies'? and do admire your clearly devoted research and determination to utilise many contributing resources.

Would like to read the poetry published. More pleased I came than expected. Enjoyed repetition of some phrases e.g. 'rained incessantly' (the bit about beaches—never quite got that before) Thank you.

## Effects of Engines

Enjoyed the different voices – could you develop this further for performance + or/ publication? Also liked heaving the technical side of the work and the visit to the wind farm. As an event this worked well as it broadens access to technologies that surround us everyday.

I enjoyed the combination of being into the landscape and the poetry, it helped to set the scene and root the words in place. Although I am familiar with the archive, the performance gave a new insight into something familiar. Elements of the poems transported me to point in Cornwall's past and landscape and brought them into the room.

It was a privilege to get a chance to visit the wind farm too!

Very good expression of landscape and connectivity. I really liked the connections with stone and trees.

Annabel, your work is wonderful. I found the performance inspiring. It's a fantastic was of connecting the landscape and industrial past through archives and wind turbines are brilliant!

I enjoyed this new experience very much!

If the weather was better it would have been good to have had the reading on site with the noise of the blades beating a constant beat.

The visit to the wind farm was interesting although it is a familiar part of the Cornish landscape one rarely, if at all, gets that close to one. I enjoyed the poetry with the interjections from the perspective of the archivist.

Really enjoyed it, thanks. Can see how it would have probably been more powerful for your to do the reading up at the farm. Would like to have the chance to read the work at my own pace as well.

I just have a problem with the word 'proud' which is which I have difficulty with this question but overall this poetry embodies the complexities of Cornishness as it is suggested by and related to landscape history and so on. So rich this stuff and such sophistication of thought and practice.

## Books

I found the ones I saw 'delivered' at KEM ringing true in my ears especially the one about the switches [Panel]. I felt like rain and struggle came through a lot and they made me think a lot. I will read a few times more.

I already have a favourite. I think it refers to some students decorating [Trevithick's] statue. My daughter has left Cornwall to start mining engineer's job. It makes you think. [People I know] who worked at Crofty and Jane and Billiton Minerals at Bissoe will enjoy also. I have 2 people in mind [to give copies of the books to].

The buildings tell a different story every time you visit don't you think.... sometimes they are in sunlight and you can imagine a busy day in history and it all working and then sometimes on a grey day they strike your heart that they are now really a thing of times gone by and have such a significant footprint in our lives... I hope the buildings last for many generations to come and that your poetry and books etc., last for many generations to come and I would love to be able to leave the poetry you give to me for my future grandchildren with a little note from yourself inside, that would be rather special wouldn't it?

My first impressions [were] of struggle - the power of rain and water and contamination of water you show many other sides/perspectives, this one comes through on top for me

The performance was so close to mining machinery and this feels closer to the archive.

I was surprised to see the word county—I remembered you saying it at the time and I knew there would be some people who didn't like it, but in the poem it's more obvious that this is Boulton and Watt I suppose.

When I heard you read it you had your own rhythms and pauses and way of saying things. I remember you made a fist and gestured throwing along with the words of the poem and when I read that again I remembered it and it made it more forceful. [but] mostly I couldn't

remember a lot of the poems and when I was reading them I found my own little favourite bits, like the Trevithick poem.

Really useful to see the shape/ form- so I could try to find out what was archive and what was letters.

I liked reading the first poem again. I understood what was happening with it in the performance but it was good to pick those up again and follow them through the poems

I think I wrote on my feedback that I would have liked to take away the poems. Perhaps I wouldn't have thought of asking for them but you gave us those leaflets and they had the words set out nicely that I wanted to see how you had arranged the rest on the page. And I wanted to read them again too.

When I heard you read it you had your own rhythms and pauses and way of saying things. I remember you made a fist and gestured throwing along with the words of the poem and when I read that again I remembered it and it made it more forceful. [but] mostly I couldn't remember a lot of the poems and when I was reading them I found my own little favourite bits, like the Trevithick poem. I won't go past the statue the same now!

I could see the shape, the form of the words. I could try to find out what was archive, what was letter—like in the Stamps and Stories poem, how they were working together, getting mixed up.

It's really for me, what I like, having the material thing. I love books, paper. Words and letters. Without a recording [of the reading] the artefact means I can return to it. The reading had its clear links because of where we were, and was more distanced from the letters. The poetry book feels closer to the letters, because it is paper and words. There is more of a direct correspondence. It's a different experience. I feel like the performance was close to the mining history, with the machinery and the direct mentions of Boulton and Watt, but the books feel definitely closer to the archive, and it brings me with it.

If I had had the books after the readings I would have gone home and read them straight away. I liked guessing at what was archive and what was modern. You gave us clues on the page. It was like a treasure hunt.

I found my own words in the poetry when you read it and I am so pleased to have them written down. I think I have found myself again in some of the other ideas. Only you and I know what we said and I think that's lovely.

It was good to read the poems again, to see them written down and the way they sit on the page. It makes such a difference to read them after hearing you read them. The bits you repeated, bits about rain, I see them and remember the reading. I have found a lot of new ideas in the poems now I can read them.

I had fun on the trip to the wind farm but the mining performance was stronger, for me. But I prefer reading the engine house poems. They work really well on the page. Your questions about feeling more connected to Cornwall. I would probably answer that more strongly now. Because I can see your connections and it makes you think, doesn't it.



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